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Court tells PBA: Let Asi Taulava play in Finals

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Missing OFW found dead in Riyadh hospital due to traffic accident

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37 die in deadliest day for US troops in Iraq

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First of GMA appointees goes thru Senate wringer

GMA 'classmate' wants old customs job back

By Armand N. Nocum

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

CAP planholders demand their money back in full

By Doris Pazzibugan and Christine O. Avendaño

Friday, January 28, 2005 • 36 pages / vol. IX / no. 51 website: www.inq7.net

Yahoo! Peso at 55.15:$1

Investors pour dollars into RP

POLITICS MAKES STRANGE BEDFELLOWS: Representatives Ganer Orcanjo and Imee Marcos (seen together with other opposition co-the VWL like Rep. Liza Maza (at right), among the 22 opposition congressmen, who walk out of the session hall of the Batasang Pambansa on Wednesday night. Orcanjo was jailed by Ferdinand Marcos for a lengthy period during martial law and he escaped.

By Doris C. Dumlao, Juliet Labog-Javellana and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

Joker digs in to block VAT

Noodles go up to P5.35, and other 'slight' hikes

By Yuk Castaneda and Norman Bordadora

Why power rates are high, and will go higher

By John Mary

How PNP officer's family lives without electricity in the city

By Luige A. del Puerto

Mining new buzzword; $6B expected to flow in

A3
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
FRIDAY, JANUARY 28, 2005
Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

AT THE SENATE

1st of new GMA team goes through wringer

By Christine O. Avendaño
and Michael Lim Ubac

THEY have not yet taken their seats but already the members of President Macapagal-Arroyo's new economic team have incurred feeling the heat.

Sen. Joker Arroyo branded the appointment of Raphael Lotilla as a "vacuum weight" and the new energy secretary as a "non-entity."

Lotilla was grilled yesterday by members of the new Congressional Power Commission (CPC) on the sale of the Manobo coal-fired plant in Zamboanga and to be the biggest asset and generating company of government, and got the mixed bag questions from Arroyo.

Energy officials last month sweetened the plant so PHR Inc., a consortium of Filipino and Australian businessmen who were expected to pay P161 million or P13 billion to the government, most of it in installments over the next seven years.

In the hearing, Arroyo subjected Lotilla, the outgoing president of the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (Psalm) to questions on the financial standing of PHR.

Arroyo had earlier questioned the decision of PHR Inc. to acquire the plant only had a paid-up capital of P1 million and had no track record in power generation.

Like a rookie

Arroyo asked Lotilla if he had been in the NPC office in Pasig, Manila. "It looks like a rookie," Arroyo said.

Arroyo then asked Lotilla if he had looked into the background and track record of the Australian partners of PHR.

Lotilla replied the Australians had a good track record.

But Arroyo insisted the Australians had no track record in power generation. "You make use of your commercial sense," he repeatedly told Lotilla, urging him to check out the Australian partners.

To reporters later, Arroyo said he personally visited the NPC office and found that it was chasing space with a perforated screen.

Before Arroyo, Lotilla was grilled by Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, who co-chairs the power commission with Rep. Celia Bautista.

Santiago asked Lotilla about reports that somebody made money in the rush to award the Manobo plant to PHR.

Huge commission

She said a 3-percent commission would have been big enough considering the plant cost over $600 million.

"We want to assure you that on the part of Psalm, we have lived up to the highest standards of governance," Lotilla answered.

Santiago also rebutted Enzo Lotilla that last June when the government would make from the sale of Masinloc was the same amount the government owed for paying up the plant.

"We sell the plant and we no longer have debts, but we don't have Masinloc anymore," Santiago said.

Santiago later told reporters the power commission was not about to give its blessings to the sale of Masinloc to PHR. "This is a very long sale," she said.

Galvanizing on value he meant by "vacuum weight," Arroyo told Senate reporters that Lotilla being named energy secretary was "making Agay, walang dimas (lightweight, but true)."

'Let's see'

He said there was doubt in his decision in Lotilla's performance as president of Psalm, which is handling the privatization of National Power Corp.

"You are the way he answered, palagay ngay (leaning toward the body)," said Arroyo.

Asked if he would urge administration allies in the chamber to block Lotilla's confirmation, Arroyo said: "Let's see."

Santiago, for her part, said she would block Lotilla's confirmation "if he fails to present the books adduit (at that he has passed or is accountable)."

"The okay with that. I'm happy that Senator Santiago said that," Arroyo said.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said incoming Cayetano chief Alberto Lina should divest himself of his ownership in certain businesses to avoid any conflict of interest that may compromise the performance of his official duties."

Pimentel said Lina had listed in his business as least 12 corporations, including ones involved in consumer, beverage and others in air transportation and trading in which he was the chair and majority owner.

Real divestment

"That is really a matter for serious concern, because among other businesses, Mr. Lina is running federal Express. Which means the first thing he should do or to divest himself of his business interests. And it should be real divestment," he said.

But he also pointed out that just because Lina was engaged in certain businesses, that should not automatically disqualify him from the various post.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said last June that whatever

Japan stands firm on new policy

By TJ Burgonio

IT'S FINAL.

Japan stood tougher on its new policy regulating entertainers who want to enter the country as officials of the Japanese Embassy in Manila said yesterday.

Minoru Watanabe, minister for political affairs of the embassy, said: "The Cabinet of Japan has approved a series of action plans combating the trafficking of persons. That was decided, that's final," dashing Philippine hopes a memorandum could have been worked out on its implementation.

"As soon as possible," Watanabe said when asked when the new rule would take effect.

Under the rule, Filipino entertainers wishing to work in Japan must present proof of two years' training or experience in a country other than Japan before they would be given visas.

At present, the rules merely require the submission of an artist's artwork card (AAC), a government document certifying the holder's skills in music or dance.

Watanabe said Filipinos had no reason to worry about the policy as long as they had "genuine talent" or career in Japan legally.

"If a lady has full experience or training as an entertainer, there's no problem with her entering Japan. Genuine entertainers are most welcome. Those who can't come to Japan are those who don't have talent or training or experience," he said.

The new immigration rule, he pointed out, "was clearly in the policies of the Philippines, which mandate an artificial ticking late in 2003 and has been agonizing antitrafficking resolutions in the United Nations for the past several years.

Yahoo! Peso at 55.15:$1

From page A1

ished the Philippine government to price its largest single-currency deal and spurred strong demand in the secondary market for the country's paper. The government last regularly sold five- to 15-billion baht bonds.

The Philippines, Asia's most active sovereign bond issuer outside of Japan, priced the 25-year bond on Wednesday at a yield of 9.70 percent.

'Doing something right'

The bond sale came a week after an international credit ratings agency Standard & Poor's downgraded the country's foreign-currency rating by one notch to BB-minus, citing a lack of urgency by the government in tackling persistently yawning fiscal concerns.

Investors quoted a source familiar with the bond offering as saying that investors entered the Philippines as having navigated the worst of its difficulties, with the domestic economy performing well and saving appetite a little behind the curve.

"We must be doing something very right to get this kind of response from the international financial community," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye who had been hopeful early concerning the negative impact of BB+ downgrade.

More positive news

Most bullish said investors were also observing the government's resilience in implementing fiscal reforms to address a yawning budget deficit and Mr Arroyo's appointment of three new members to her team of economic managers.

Shortly before dawn Thursday the House of Representatives approved a measure raising the value-added tax on goods and services to 12 percent from 10 percent. A similar bill must be approved by the Senate before it is signed into law.

Earlier, Ms Arroyo signed the Lateral Attrition Act of 2005—a measure aimed primarily at improving tax collection—and another bill that raised taxes on tobacco and liquor products. The three laws are part of her administration's fiscal reform package.

Bank traders said investors were also upbeat over the congenial macro-economic outlook this year and the peso's rise against the dollar.

"There are strong (dollar) inflows and favorable reaction to positive news coming from the passage of the VAT bill and [the narrowed opposition's] slate of new economic managers being sent here," said Rolland Sevaster, treasurer of Citizenbank Commercial Bank Philippines.

Proceeds from SMC's borrowing

Asset said investors were pouring dollars into the fixed-income market, particularly government securities. Aside from the government bond issue, proceeds from the $1.05-billion loan borrowing announced by food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp. are likewise expected to boost the dollar supply in the Philippine Dealing System, adding fuel to the peso's strong rally.

"This is not for some fast-talking dealer buying, dreams said the peso would have easily breached the 55.50 barrier and started trading in the 54 level.

Jose Emmanuel Villado, president of foreign exchange underwriter MCI Philippines and treasurer of MBG Peso Bank, said the peso's appreciation to 54.81 would happen any time—"not immediately but probably within the first quarter."

Round of applause

At the launching of the private equity fund for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), Ms Arroyo drew a round of applause from the crowd of bankers, investors and Cabinet officials, including the new appointees—Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima, Trade Secretary Jose Sanso and Economic Coordinator Alberto Lim.

She said the country's economic fundamentals remained sound, citing the country's trade surplus of $103 million last November compared to the $195-million deficit during the same period in 2003.

"We must now bring the benefits of this macro-economic performance to the average Filipino," Ms Arroyo said. One way she said, is to support the group's SME efforts.

"Small and medium entrepreneurs have proven the capacity in turn their capital around in the shortest period of time and create jobs," she said. "This private equity fund complements the government's financing programs on trade and entrepreneurship, skills development and product design."

The Philippines' budget deficit is expected to narrow slightly to P300 billion, or 3.5 percent of gross domestic product this year, from P330.1 billion or 3.9 percent of GDP in 2004, due to higher tax and tariff collections.

US and European buyers took 20 percent each of the Philippine government's bond float, taxpayer's treasurer accounted for 16 percent, Philippine clients took 10 percent and the remainder went to Hong Kong customers. By investor type, asset managers accounted for 74 percent, banks 13 percent, insurance companies 4 percent and retails 9 percent.

Citigroup, Deutsche Bank and HSBC were the joint lead arrangers on the deal.

The government plans to borrow as much as $7 billion this year to finance its budget deficit and support the operations of state financial house Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. (PDIC) and Home Guaranty Corp. (HGC).

ANTI-VAT protesters rear out in the streets in full force, as promised, by militant groups after the Thursday dawn passage of the House bill increasing VAT by 1 percent.

CHIMING moment: The economy is on a roll, sends President Arroyo beaming last night as she launches the Philippine Bank-Across SME equity fund at the Palace on Pleasure right. Back to camera are incoming Trade Secretary Jose Sanso (left) and Senior Presidential Adviser for International Competitiveness Roberto Romulo.

FACTBOX

Mining booming

PHILIPPINE mining shares have been deeply in the wake of a four-time Court ruling that crippled interest in the country's long-dormant mining sector.

Here's one statistic on the erratic mining's love that's: $1-billion open to foreign investors.

Lepanto Consolidated Mining Company

- The country's largest mining firm with a market capitalization of $1.06 million.
- Total sales reached P1.3 billion ($22.6 million) in the first nine months of 2004, mainly gold and silver from its two Victoria mines in Benguet.
- Posts a net loss of P180 million in 2003 but a profit of P9.8 million in the first nine months of 2004.
- Secured $3-million loan in December from Canada's Ivanhoe Mines Ltd. in exchange for giving Ivanhoe first negotiation rights on future projects. Aims to include a low-copper mine.
- Shares price has doubled to P6.50 from P3.25 on Dec. 1. Rise day of the Supreme Court ruling.

Philex Mining Corp.

- Has one major operational site, the Padcopper mine in Benguet.
- Major gold feature: Positioning drafted at site in Surigao del Norte under joint venture with Anglo Asia Gold. Philex said it had total unexplored resources of 2.3 million ounces as of December 2003.
- Revenues rise to P10.8 billion in the first nine months of 2004 from P4.2 billion a year earlier.
- Profits have more than tripled to P1.76 from P513 on Dec. 1.

Manila Mining

- An affiliate of Lepanto. It has had no operational income since 2003.
- Semi-primitive in Mabuyan city on Surigao del Norte related to the Philex-Anglo American project.
- Net loss rose to P78 million in the first nine months of 2004 from P1 million a year earlier.
- Shares have risen six percent to P0.0202 since Dec. 1.

Benguet Corp.

- Was the country's biggest gold mining firm and the fifth biggest in the world in the 1980s.
- Looking for investment partners for a copper, gold and silver project in southern Davao del Norte.
- The project is seen yielding 2 billion pounds of copper concentrate, 600 million pounds of copper cathode, 4 million ounces of gold and 4 million ounces of silver with environmental mine values of $1 billion.
- Its mining investment reached P100 million in the first nine months of last year. Had a net loss of P156 million in that period, down from P200 million a year earlier.
- Shares have risen almost 80 percent to P0.0900 Dec. 1.

Apex Mining Corp.

- Mining operations suspended since 2000.
- Has started rehabilitating facilities at its Masara gold mine in southern Mindanao.
- Net loss of net loss to P9.7 million in the first nine months of 2004 from P57.3 million a year earlier.
- Shares have more than doubled to P0.1 since Dec. 1. ($=P56.0). Reuters

Mining new buzzword . . .

Turn to page A1

ing gold, nickel, copper and bauxite.

Decline, stagnation

Mining in the Philippines accounted for 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) and a robust $6 billion of exports in the early 1990s. By 2003, it was just one percent of GDP and barely 2 percent of exports.

Government geologists estimate undiscovered gold, copper and other minerals worth about $1 trillion. The government-estimated potential copper ore resources is 1.44 billion tons, gold ore at 795 million tons and nickel ore at 324 million tons in 2002, making it potentially the world's fifth-biggest mineral producer.

But the country's annual mineral exports have stagnated at around $500 million. That's less than half of Chile's mining exports of $1.3 billion in November alone.

Checkered history

A string of environmental disasters and clashes with local communities tainted the industry in the 1990s, leading to a 2003 ruling by the Supreme Court declaring that the 1995 Mining Act, drawn up in an attempt to revive the sector, went against constitutional limits on foreign ownership.

The court reversed its ruling last December, clearing the way for foreign firms to own 100 percent of local projects.

But foreign investors may prove to be not that keen in investing in a country with a checkered history of mining disasters, corruption and rebel insurgencies.

"They probably have appreciable reserves, but the geology aren't that good," said CIMB-Newstock's Yong. "I'm not sure that the Philippines is seen as being an area where there's a tremendous potential, compared with places like Chile and Peru."

Low grades mean that most are mined by extracted—at higher cost—for the same amount of metal.

Bad memories

Many within in the Philippines, including the powerful Catholic Church, are deprived of government and industry assurances that they have learned from disasters.

Memories are still fresh of the country's worst industrial accident in 1996 when a 1.6-tone of sulphuric tailings accidentally leaked into two rivers at the Marcopper mine site in Marinduque. Residents filed a P50-billion lawsuit in 1997 after a series lawsuit against former Marcopper shareholder Placer Dome Inc.

Such accidents, corruption and rebels worry most foreign investors, though, according to Peter Redfern, sales exec a Canberra consultancy in Manila.

"They will come to the Philippines because it's a safe country and they can't ignore it," Redfern said.

Hot commodity

Indeed, Japanese firm Mitsui Mining Co. Ltd. started building last year at the Coral Bay nickel plant in Palawan with local partner Rio Tuba Nickel Mining Corp. Mitsui also Co. and Sojitz Corp. are also investors.

Philippine mining firms have become a hot commodity.

Shares of Lepanto, Benguet Corp. and Philex Mining Corp. have surged in the month since the ruling, despite firms being on overseas sign of values they will be able to dig themselves out of losses. The so-called junior stocks don't interest bigger players and analysts have virtually ignored them for years.

Showcase

Still, Lepanto, which has two operational gold and silver mines in Benguet province, invested a $3-million loan from Canada's Ivanhoe Mines Ltd. soon after the ruling.

"We want to be the showcase for mining," Reynald. Reuters

4 suspected rebels killed near Luisita

VICTORIA, Tarlac—Four suspected New People's Army rebels were killed while four others were arrested after a brief clash with government soldiers in Barangay Baming here the other day, the military said yesterday.

Military spokesperson Lt. Col. Buenaventura Nicanal said the gunfight took place Wednesday afternoon in Victoria town, some 44 km north of Hacienda Luisita. The communist rebels attacked an Army patrol, triggering a gun battle.

Authorities identified two of the fatalities as Felino Briones of Sitio Cuyo and Alex Balan of Tarlac City. Some of the soldiers were from the military unit.

Arrested were Rudy Manalaysay, 36; Jhonnie Briones, 19, and his son, Dexter Briones, 14, all of Barangay Baming.

Another suspected rebel, who was wounded during the encounter, was arrested at dawn Thursday and was taken to an undisclosed hospital, according to Capt. Bird Bombeo, spokesperson of the Army's 7th Infantry Division based in Fort Magsaysay.

"They came from Hacienda Luisita and they were here to rest. Their presence here only proves that the striking workers in Luisita have been infiltrated by the NPA," Bombeo said. The Army suspects, however, said they were farmers and not rebels. *Russell Arador, Jr. Abottom Clemente, Donald Rose and Fenette Arcajo, PIO Cpnls at Luisa Dist*

The Daily Gospel

Friday, January 28, 2005
3rd Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Heb 10:11-18
Gospel: Mark 4:1-20

A sower also said, "So the kingdom of God is as if someone were to scatter seed upon the soil. Whether he is asleep or awake, by night or day, the seed sprouts and grows, he knows not how. The soil produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when it is ripe for harvesting, then one the sickle for the coming; the time for harvest has come."

Jesus also said, "What is the kingdom of God like? To what shall we compare it? It is like a mustard seed which, when sown, is the smallest of all the seeds scattered upon the soil; but once sown, it grows up and becomes the largest of the plants. It puts forth great branches so big that the birds of the air can take shelter in its shade."

Jesus used many such stories or parables, to proclaim the word to them in a way they could be able to understand. He would use such clear, without parables, but privately to his disciples he explained everything.

Commentary:

Jesus gives another comic comes sowing seed on soil and once it's sown, whether he sleeps or watches it, it grows and grows until ripe for the harvest. In a mustard seed, so tiny you'll grow into a weed, is built a safe haven that supports the birds of the air, giving them shelter. These are parables, stories told a story that Jesus uses to read his disciples what he is doing in the world and what they are to do in turn. The literal meaning of parable is the person of Jesus is present, far-ranging in power and effect, and it becomes something that surprises others and provokes and shelters the small of the world—the doers, the agents, the workers, the majority of birds that most would think of as a nuisance or unpalatable.

Western Agency, because for its undeserved intelligence, now showed us a "doubt on." In terms, theology and doubt are tied but there is that nothing he could say would compare to Jesus' stories, presence and person who transformed those who were in misery to people of hope, to the children of God. What are our words and lives saying to the most desperate of the world?

Clarence Gallimore, Jr., February 9, 1999, Lexington, Quoted in Clay Richardson, Mercer: 1999 Sermon Clip, 30, 451-1999, Fax 505-1678, E-mail: mail@mercer.org, Website: http://www.bible.org/sermons/clarence-gallimore/mercer.htm

Supreme Court Doctrines

CIVIL LAW; OBLIGATIONS AND CONTRACTS; NOMINATE LAW SCHOOL TRUCTURED—A compromise is a contract whereby the parties, by making reciprocal concessions, avoid a litigation or put an end to one already commenced. It is an agreement between two or more persons, who for preventing or putting an end to a lawsuit, adjust their difficulties by mutual consent in the manner which they agree on, and which everyone of them performs the hope of gaining, balanced by the danger of losing. The general rule is that a compromise has upon the parties the effect and authority of res judicata, with respect to the matters definitely stated therein, or which by clear inference from its terms should be deemed to have been included therein. The holds true even if the agreement has not been judicially approved. Applying existing jurisprudence, the compromise agreements in the present context became binding between the parties upon its execution and not upon its court approval. From the time a compromise is lawfully entered into, it becomes the source of the rights and obligations of the parties thereto. The purpose of the compromise is precisely to replace and terminate controverted claims. Mariano entered [illegible] Development Corporation and Western Resources Foundation, Inc. vs. Santos, G.R. No. 153004, November 4, 2004] By G. R. Vitto

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Poverty top issue at World Economic Forum

By Ingani Yardley
Publisher

DAVOS, Switzerland—The problem of poverty tops the agenda of this year's annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in this resort town.

About 700 leaders chose six "tough issues" as top priorities for the Forum's agenda at a Global Town Hall meeting on Wednesday.

The six top issues and the votes they got:

1. Poverty—64.4 percent
2. Equitable globalization—34.9 percent
3. Climate change—32.2 percent
4. Education—43.9 percent
5. The Middle East—42.7 percent
6. Global governance—43.4 percent

Participants in the annual meeting will discuss and develop action agendas on the six priorities in the next three days.

Among the reasons the participants in the Global Town Hall gave for their votes were:

1. Poverty—The link between all social issues fundamental to everything; reducing poverty will reduce terrorism and instability; poverty is ethically unacceptable; action is required urgently.

2. Equitable globalization—Present way to fair distribution of wealth and unfair trade in power, leads to wider representation through democratic decision-making; best way to improve the state of the world.

3. Climate change—Global in scope and impact; potentially irreversible; "if we don't fix it, nothing else matters"; "an unbearable challenge."

4. Education—Essential in solving problems of the first three priorities; women's education is key; science and technology skills are important for sustained development; "education is the key to success for poor countries."

5. Middle East—The linchpin for global security; "the Arab-Israeli conflict is no longer a cause for leaders not to make wider reforms"; perception that the West and Israel are biased against the Muslim world"; population is poor, uneducated and oppressed.

6. Global governance—Opportunity for multilateral decision making; "global leadership, not world government"; adapt to structures needed to manage globalization and interdependence. Good structure will lead to effective responses to crises and opportunities.

Of the Global Town Hall participants, 66 percent were male and 34 percent female. Twelve percent were in the 30 to 39 age group; 38 percent, 40 to 49; 41 percent, 50-59; 20 percent, 60 or older.

Thirty-five percent were from Europe; 31 percent, North America; 15 percent, Asia-Pacific; 8 percent, Middle East; 5 percent, Latin America, and 4 percent, Africa.

Fifty percent were from business; 9 percent, the academe; 8 percent, media; 8 percent, non-government organizations; 6 percent, government; 4 percent, science and medicine; 3 percent, the arts; 3 percent, religion, and 10 percent, other sectors.

Graf Davos, managing director of the Centre for Strategic Insight, said, "Taking responsibility for tough choices is not just a throwaway line but one that we hope will lead to clear-headed action at the end."

Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum, said the group had a very unique opportunity in Davos "not only to identify the key issues but also to brainstorm the key challenges within these issues."

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Joma says move to have him deported 'useless'

LUCENA CITY—Self-exiled Communist Party of the Philippines founder Jose Ma. Sison yesterday described the campaign of government officials to lobby for his deportation from the Netherlands "useless and counterproductive."

"The foreign visit of Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Hermogenes Esperon and Presidential Chief of Staff Norberto Gonzales to various and countries[sic] productive if the objective is to force my return to the Philippines," said Sison in a statement e-mailed to the bureau.

The Philippine officials are on a six-day trip to Norway, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands to try to convince the Dutch government that it is safe to send Sison home despite his application for asylum.

Romulo had said in a statement that Sison did not have to fear political persecution in the Philippines.

In 1987, following the assassination of several leading figures in the leftist movement in the Philippines, Sison went into political exile.

Sison said that not even the Dutch government or the European Union could force him to return to the Philippines.

"As a recognized political refugee, I am protected by the Refugee Convention and by Article 3 and the corollary of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms," he said.

On Aug. 9, 2002, the US State Department listed the CPP and its military wing, the New People's Army as "foreign terrorist organizations."

Three days later, the US treasury department also listed Sison as a "terrorist" whose assets must be frozen.

On Oct. 29, 2003, the European Union followed suit and designated Sison and the NPA in its list of terrorist persons, groups and entities.

Peace talks[/endnote] by Norway since 2001 stalled last August when the Arroyo administration refused to seek Sison's removal from the US terrorist list.

Sison, who serves as the NDF's chief political consultant in peace talks, said the communists are ready to return to the negotiating table as soon as the government undertakes measures to have them resident all the terrorist list.

Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau; Alcuin Papa and LA Bumatay, Manila

Suspected Abu financier leaves RP

A SAUDI Arabian national suspected of financing the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf terrorist group left the country Wednesday after he agreed to self-deportation, according to the Bureau of Immigration.

Muhammad Abdullah Bogshaan boarded a Saudi Airways flight to Jeddah, Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez said. He was accompanied by a diplomat from the Saudi Embassy in Manila.

Bogshaan's departure was approved by the immigration board of commissioners and was cleared by the courts, the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, the National Bureau of Investigation and the Philippine National Police.

Bogshaan was tackled on Jan. 17 at the Zamboanga airport by immigration agents upon arriving on a Philippine Airlines flight from Manila. Bogshaan arrived from Jeddah via the Netherlands' he was arrested.

Bogshaan has been on the immigration watch list of suspected foreign terrorists since March but was intelligence reports said he was a financier of the widow and son of Abu Abu Sayyaf leader Abdulrajak Janjalani.

He was also pointed by classified by detained Abu Sayyaf member Nur Muhammad Misuari as the contact person of local terrorist leaders, including Janjalani's successor and brother, Khaddafy. The Saudi national allegedly entered financial support to the group and its members, he said. *Jerome Aning and Nikko Dizon*

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3 Senate committees to investigate CAP

By Cinnamo G. Avendaño

DON'T buy pre-need insurance plans from the state-owned College Assurance Plan Philippines Inc. (CAP) or [illegible] paying for existing policies, two senators urged the public yesterday.

Three Senate committees—banks, trade and commerce, and accounts—are set to hold hearings on the financial woes of CAP, which has more than 750,000 plan holders.

CAP planholders demand the full amount they're entitled to get

Turn to page A6

and Dee Gerardo, a government employee.

Yu and her wife Jolenie, a fellow government employee, took out educational policies for their two children when they were still in Iloilo. They paid the policies for five years.

"We really prioritized their education. We wanted to be assured that they would go to college. We anticipated that by the time they go to college, tuition would be expensive," Dee said.

Now their eldest son is about to enter college next year. Their youngest daughter will enter college in three years' time.

The Gerardos are among the hundreds of thousands of parents who now curiously scrutinize their children's college education because CAP has acknowledged it does not have the funds to cover all the maturing policies.

Bouncing checks

Universities had stopped taking checks issued by CAP to cover the tuition of those policyholders since last year when the checks started to bounce.

The University of the Philippines and the Philippine Christian University (PCU) said they were requiring the CAP "scholars" to pay their tuition in cash first and have them CAP reimburse them for what they had paid.

"CAP's checks have bounced," said a staffer in the PCU Registrar's Office.

Luckily for the Sonico couple, their son was able to secure a full tuition scholarship from the mission she Manila Forum (IF).

"If it were not for the scholarship, I think I would be crying all day," Salome Grino said.

Dee said he and his wife were saving for their daughter's college education because they were relying solely on CAP. "We'll be in nothing on our CAP policy in that case. Where else do we get the money?"

Disgusted

The one who sold the CAP policy to the Gerardos is in the same boat.

"I'm really disgusted," said Carmelita Crisostomo, an insurance division chief in a government agency, who had bought two CAP pension policies for her children.

Now grown up, Crisostomo's children have also taken out for their own existing GSS educational policies, which they are still paying for.

"CAP should seek to make sure all their clients receive their money in full. They've worked hard for it," Crisostomo said.

"They should not only get what they paid, but the full amount that they're supposed to receive under their plan," she added.

Warning

Having once been a CAP agent, Crisostomo said she did not get any advice, not even an informal one, from the CAP area manager when the bad rumors started.

She said CAP had been warned "long before" to stop selling plans so that its deficit would not worsen. "But up to the time they're still selling CAP. And people are still banking on CAP. After all, who would not have trusted CAP?" she said.

Crisostomo now regrets having asked her children to pay their CAP premiums that were due last November despite the rumors. "Sayang (What a pity). The money they have already paid could have bought them a house," she said.

For now, Dee and Salome are holding on to their "certificates of full payment" from CAP that was signed by no less than former President Diosdado Macapagal, who was board chair from 1999 to 1997.

Lowney speaks on what makes the Jesuits tick

THE MNSY & Cory Aquino Center for Leadership in cooperation with Jesuit Communique inc will host the Chris Lowney Lecture on Feb. 4, 2005, at the Hotel Inter-Continental in Makati City from 8:30 a.m. to noon.

Lowney, author of the groundbreaking book, Heroic Leadership, wrote about a 450-year-old company...the Jesuits...which pioneered a unique formula for molding leaders and in the process built one of history's most successful companies. He further avers that the Jesuits' enduring success rested on the Ignatian spirit in the context of leadership grounded on the four pillars: self-awareness, ingenuity, love and heroism. Revenues from [illegible] have fueled the book [illegible] recommended it as a very helpful framework for leadership. Lowney, a former Jesuit, was an executive at J.P. Morgan & Co.

For details, call Sheila Villoga at 0928 9827 (Globe) and 928-6001 ext. 4049.

The inquiry came as a result of the privilege speech delivered the other night by opposition Sen. Sergio Osmeña III, who noted that Senate employees had purchased health insurance from CAP.

Osmeña said CAP should not be allowed to continue selling plans or to collect on existing plans given its shaky financial situation.

He quoted a report that showed that CAP's deficit or its actuarial reserve liability amounted to P18 billion last year. Its debts totaled P20 billion, but its assets were only valued at P7 billion to P8 billion.

"That's why CAP is having a difficult time. That's a bankrupt company and I don't think they should be allowed to continue selling plans or continue to collect existing plans," he said.

Osmeña said there should be a proper liquidation of CAP "in order to serve the interest of the public."

Asked how those with existing plans would be reimbursed, Osmeña said there was no special government fund to help them.

"The only way out [one are or this issue under existing law] is the proper, orderly liquidation," Osmeña said.

He said the Insurance and Exchange Commission (SEC) should have either warned the public two years ago about CAP's financial situation or suspended its license.

Osmeña revealed that a month ago, SEC officials said that "they were under political pressure to allow CAP to continue."

"And this is not a crime because these 750,000 families who do not have hope of getting paid 20 years from today . . . will be still somehow enticed into investing hard-earned money into the plans," he said.

He said people should not pay for the CAP plans, stating that it was "like throwing good money out."

Sen. Mar Roxas also urged the public not to pay for CAP plans given the financial problems of the firm.

Roxas urged the SEC to make public the results of two recent investigations conducted to determine CAP's financial condition.

TOUPEE down for the College Assurance Plan Trust Senators Mar Roxas and Serge Osmeña who are set to investigate the financial woes of the pre-need company.

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The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Casaso

37 Americans die in deadliest day for US in Iraq

BAGHDAD—A US military helicopter crashed in western Iraq Wednesday, killing 31 US military personnel while six other US soldiers died elsewhere in the deadliest day for American forces in the 22-month-old war.

US President George W. Bush, meanwhile, urged Iraqis to brave deadly threats and vote in national elections on Sunday, but violence continued to plague the country as 30 Iraqis were killed across the country including 13 in a truck bomb targeting a Kurdish political party in northern Iraq.

Lt. Gen. John Sattler, the commander of Marine forces in Iraq, said 30 Marines and a sailor were killed when a CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter crashed near Al Rutbah in western Iraq.

"The 1st Marine Expeditionary Force mourns the tragic loss of our brothers in arms," Sattler said in a statement from Camp Fallujo, the marine headquarters in western Iraq.

Since the March 2003 invasion, at least 23 US aircraft have crashed in Iraq, killing some 88 troops.

Gen. John Abizaid, the commander of US forces in the region, said there were no survivors on what had been a routine mission.

"Whether you had 'oh don't know of any enemy action. The investigation will have to continue. There will have to be more than some sort of this to learn what happened."

Four other Marines were killed elsewhere in western Iraq; a US soldier in Baghdad and another in an attack on a patrol, north Baghdad, raising the day's total American fatalities to 37, the highest single-day US toll of the war.

"The story today is going to be very discouraging to the American people," Bush admitted during the first press conference of his second term of office.

"I understand that. We value life. We weep and mourn when soldiers lose their life."

Bush vowed that US troops would stay no longer than needed to stabilize Iraq but stopped short of announcing any timetable for withdrawal.

"We will complete the mission as quickly as possible," he said. "Obviously we're going to have a troop level necessary to complete the mission, and that mission is to enable Iraq to defend itself from terrorists."

The US has 138,000 troops on the ground in Iraq.

Bush urged Iraq's estimated 14.2 million eligible voters to brave death threats and take part in the first post-Saddam Hussein election on Sunday.

Ichiring Nuh, Iraqi joint chief of staff, Gen. Babakir Zebari, said Iraqi forces would take full responsibility for security by December, with 10 troops out of video and sealed bank to possibly one or two bases nationwide. AFP

PRISONERS who survived the Nazi German Auschwitz death camp in Oswiecim, Poland, in their barracks shortly after the camp was freed in this 1945 photo. Some 1,000 prisoners, including more than 600 below the age of 12, were still alive when the camp was liberated on Jan. 27, 1945. An estimated 1.5 million people, mostly Jews, were murdered in the camp by the Nazis.

Leaders mark Auschwitz liberation day

OŚWIĘCIM, Poland—World leaders were Thursday to stand side by side with some 3,000 survivors of the Nazi death camp for an emotional ceremony under a blanket of snow to mark the camp's liberation 60 years ago.

A train pulling along the tracks once used to herd more than a million people in cattle trucks to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in southern Poland was to signal the start of the ceremony set to include a plea never to let the horrors of the Holocaust happen again.

Amid sub-zero temperatures, which have already forced delays in the arrival of some participants, 18,000 people were expected to pay tribute to the at least 1.1 million people who died at Auschwitz.

Most of them were Jews exterminated in the gas chambers of the most grimly efficient of the Nazi death camps. They were among the six million people who perished during the Nazi's chilling "final solution."

In a declaration delivered as Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski, US President George W. Bush on Wednesday called on the world to unite to rise fight anti-Semitism.

The 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp is "a sobering reminder of the power of evil and the need for people to oppose evil wherever it exists," he said.

"For almost five years, Auschwitz was a factory for murder where more than a million lives were taken," he said, urging the world "never to forget the cruelty of the guilty and the courage of the victims at Auschwitz and other Nazi concentration camps."

US Vice President Dick Cheney was to be among world leaders at the event, who will also be joined by Red Army soldiers who liberated the camp on Jan. 27, 1945.

The open air ceremony, also being attended by members of European royalty, will be held at a memorial erected at the camp's Birkenau complex, between the ruins of two of gas chambers that were capable of murdering thousands of Jews every day.

Because many of the camp's victims were "selected" by the SS for immediate extermination in specially built gas chambers, they were never registered at Auschwitz, making it impossible for historians to say precisely how many people died here. The actual death toll is believed to be as high as two million.

On Thursday, Kwasniewski said the lessons learnt from Auschwitz had to be constantly repeated, not only during special ceremonies.

"When I see ethnic purges in the Balkans or what is happening in some African countries, I have to note that, unfortunately, the message of Auschwitz has not been heeded," Kwasniewski told Polish radio.

"We must constantly remind each other of the message, not only where there are occurrences like the one today," he said.

Thursday's commemorations began at 9:30 a.m. with a forum organized by the European Jewish Congress bringing young people from across the world face to face with survivors of Auschwitz and the former Soviet soldiers who freed the camp, many of them in their '80s.

It could mark "the last chance we have to gather this crucial mass of people together in the same room," Moshe Kantor, chair of the European Jewish Congress, said on the eve of the anniversary.

At the forum, Kwasniewski was due to decorate several former Red Army soldiers who liberated it during one of eastern Europe's severest winters when temperatures fell as low as 30 degrees Celsius. AFP

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Israel, Palestinians revive diplomacy

JERUSALEM—Israel and the Palestinians ended a nearly two-year freeze in high-level diplomatic contacts on Wednesday and agreed to prepare for a first summit between Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and President Mahmoud Abbas.

The dialogue, in extreme text words to decide a summit agenda, aims to build on a lull in Palestinian militant attacks secured by Abbas since his Jan. 9 election as Yasser Arafat's successor on a platform to end bloodshed raging since 2000 and talk peace.

Steps to cement a de facto truce acceleration on the ground as Palestinian security men began deploying to north Gaza to stamp out lingering, isolated gunfire by militants. Quiet has prevailed in north Gaza since a similar development last week.

But the calm was fragile, underlined by a threat from the militant al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades to resume attacks if Israel did not halt raids to seize wanted gunmen within 24 hours.

The Brigades issued the warning after an Israeli allen killed a member who tried to escape capture in the West Bank, and Abbas said his policy could be discussed without bell-ready restraint.

"The Israelis go on with such operations too—but I tone very well that this quiet is completely on one side and they must stop these actions or that our efforts will not collapse," he told reporters in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

The Israeli Army said it swooped on the militant because he was about to carry out a suicide bombing despite the truce portion of the fatal gunfire, whose ranks are known for indiscipline.

Israel says it will answer quiet with quiet and has shelved major military operations, but refused to stop selective raids.

Wednesday's talks, however, offered hope of progress.

There had been no high-level Middle East diplomacy since June 2003 when Abbas, then prime minister under Arafat, Sharon and US President George W. Bush met to launch a "road map" peace plan that was stalled by more fighting. Reuters

Rice takes charge

WASHINGTON — Condoleezza Rice was sworn into office as US secretary of state last Wednesday following her Senate approval and after blasting Democratic attacks over Iraq that heralded a fierce partisan debate on foreign policy in the coming years.

Rice, a former national security adviser to President George W. Bush and one of his closest aides, was elevated just hours earlier by the Senate to replace Colin Powell as chief US diplomat by a vote of 85 to 13, with ten abstentions.

The 50-year-old was silent and stayed out of public view as Bush administered the oath of office to her on Friday, according to White House spokesperson Scott McClellan.

Rice is the second woman, and first black woman, to assume the post of chief US diplomat.

However, the 13 "no" votes cast by Democrats were the most for a secretary of state since World War II, highlighting the party's divisions with the Republican administration over Iraq and the handling of the war on terror in general.

The Democrats said Rice's mandate could instead heritage but smoke and a light haze of debate in the fall because to signal their desire

raised questions to the policies she helped craft after the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks. AFP

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Strong quake strikes west of Sumatra

HONG KONG—A strong earthquake struck off the tsunami-ravaged west coast of Sumatra in northern Indonesia, Hong Kong seismologists said Thursday.

There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties.

The 6.1-magnitude quake hit the coast at 5:06 a.m. local time Thursday the Hong Kong Observatory said.

However, the Indonesian Meteorology and Geophysics Agency put the magnitude of the quake at 6.6, and said it was followed minutes later by another quake of 6.2 magnitude. U.S. said there were no reports of casualties or damage.

The first quake was felt in Banda Aceh, where it lasted about five seconds but was not intense. It did not cause any panic.

Earlier, the Hong Kong observatory reported a 5.8-magnitude earthquake near India's remote Nicobar islands, which have been rebuilt in recent weeks by aftershocks from last month's giant quake.

The quake struck at 12:58 a.m. late on Thursday (1:58 a.m. in Manila) and its epicenter was about 240 km north-northwest of Banda Aceh, the observatory said. AP

Tsunami aid effort 'in chaos' as deaths continue to mount

INDONESIAN tsunami survivors with their belongings walk past a ship stuck on a road in Lhoknga, Aceh province, Jan. 27. Last month's devastating earthquake and tsunami that swept the region left the Asian nation with toll of presumed dead from the disaster exceeding 100,000. AP

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia—The multibillion-dollar relief effort to help survivors of the Asian tsunami disaster in Indonesia's Aceh province is in chaos, an official report said Thursday, as the number of people presumed dead continued to rise and the UN warned some communities remained stranded.

"The west coast of Aceh continues to receive aid and assistance in a chaotic manner," said the report by a 34-member inter-agency team including the Indonesian government, the UN military, UN agencies and others.

The report gives the most frank discussion of a systematic response to the multiple needs of the population" and said the provision of health services lacked coordination and information was fragmented.

Sanitary conditions remained enormous. A post at many areas where internally displaced people (IDPs) live, with most sites having no latrines.

"In a nutshell, most IDPs are defecating in fields, open areas or canals near to their shelters. Some of these are close to rivers or coastal areas and are used for bathing and washing," said the report, given to AFP by the United Nations Logistical Information Service in Thailand.

The report also conveyed good news on the UN-led relief effort with cases of diarrhea, measles and diarrhea significantly lower than expected and other signs the massive humanitarian effort was being effective.

"Food stocks, though limited in present and current density, are reaching most large population groups via civil authorities and local distributors. Indonesia and are ready to reopen in a few areas and local foods have begun to re-appear at local markets," said the report, written just before the one-month anniversary of the Dec. 26 disaster.

Indonesia's health ministry meanwhile raised its number of people dead and missing, presumed dead by 2,333 to more than 220,000.

Sri Lanka, India and Thailand were also hard hit when giant waves smashed into 11 Indian Ocean countries, with the overall death toll now above 280,000.

The inter-agency report urged better coordination to prevent "fragile gains" so far achieved in the relief effort in Aceh.

Aceh had was more upbeat in his assessment, telling AFP: "Still, coordination could be improved but I think it's actually working quite well."

"We've come a very long way from where I was here first," he said in an interview with AFP late Wednesday. "We're in our honeymoon already."

The emergency relief phase was complete in the capital, Banda Aceh, and the were count town of Meulaboh, he said, with people receiving shelter, food, medicine and water.

But there are many isolated communities, still small villages on the west coast where people are sort of making makeshift camps in the hills and do not have a lot of access to the services that are provided in Banda Aceh and Meulaboh," Aspinall said. AFP

Blair calls on US to take climate change seriously

DAVOS, Switzerland—The United States, realizing it cannot defeat global terrorism like terrorism alone, must cooperate to fight other planetary challenges like climate change, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said on Wednesday.

"Multilateralism is no longer disputed," said Blair, speaking to a forum of business and political leaders. "If America needs the rest of the world to be part of the agenda it has set, it must be part of their agenda too."

President George W. Bush's inauguration speech last week showed the United States realized it could not defeat terror threats just by military means or on its own, said Blair, one of the US leader's staunchest allies.

Defending the speech, which was accused of not reflecting the reality of US policies, Blair said to support for extending democracy and liberty "emphatically puts defeating the causes of terrorism alongside defeating the terrorists."

Blair said other international decisions cast the war on Iraq, there was "a truth to be told." He has predicted Bush's second term would see more accurate talks of the views of Europe, which the presidents visits two month on a Europe-meeting trip.

There was common purpose in fighting global terrorism, extending democracy and ending peace in the Middle East, said Blair, stressing that those issues and his agenda for this year's Group of Eight pioneering could not be decoupled.

Blair seems to have British backwhip of the G8 group of leading industrialized nations are following Canada's lead disaster in Africa and on combating climate change.

But the Bush administration has little enthusiasm for mandatory action on curbs the warming of the planet.

It has refused to sign up to the Kyoto protocol on cutting emissions thought to cause global warming, arguing it would cost US jobs and unfairly burden developed states while imposing no obligation on poorer polluting states such as China and India.

A broad belief in Europe that environment-powered global economy is a reality is not as widely shared by the United States. Reuters

Antiglobalization forum to counter Davos summit

PORTO ALEGRE, Brazil—More than 10,000 antiglobalization activists took to the streets Wednesday in Porto Alegre in a gathering meant to counter the Davos summit of political, financial and business heavyweights.

Children from five continents held aloft a banner that proclaimed: "Another world is possible," to militants marched through the Brazilian city, marking the start of their seven-day World Social Forum.

The eclectic gathering of pacifists, environmentalists, libertarians, trade unionists and anti-globalization militants was timed to coincide with its namesake, the World Economic Forum held in the posh Swiss mountain resort of Davos.

Organizers said some 100,000 participants will take part in the fifth annual WSF, which features hundreds of workshops addressing with issues such as debt, poverty and development. AFP

Suicidal man leaves car on LA tracks, causes train collision which kills 10

GLENDALE, California—Ten people were killed and more than 180 injured in the Los Angeles suburb Wednesday when two commuter trains slammed into each other after one of them hit a car left on the tracks by a suicidal man, police said.

A massive investigation was launched as the death toll rose following the horrific early morning crash involving three trains and a sports utility vehicle in the heavily populated suburb of Glendale.

Rescuers were picking through the mangled wreckage of the trains that collided with an explosive truck just after 6 a.m. after one of them derailed as it plunged into the downtown tracks.

"We have 10 fatalities so far and well over 100 injured," Glendale Police Chief Randy Adams told reporters, adding that the probe into the accident had turned into a homicide investigation.

"This whole incident was started by a deranged individual who was suicidal," he said announcing that the deceased driver, identified as Juan Manuel Alvarez, 26, was a citizen and was in custody.

The police chief said Alvarez was uncooperative, but that he has been talking to investigators.

"He has been cooperative and he has talked to our investigators," Adams said, adding that "his statement is disturbingly, incomprehensible."

The driver was expected to be charged with murder, police said. Adams said Alvarez would likely face up to 10 counts of murder.

The driver allegedly drove from his Jeep onto the tracks, where it became stuck, and waited for a train to end his life, according to Adams and other police officials.

"He was intent in that time on taking his own life but changed his mind," Adams told reporters.

"He started the vehicle and stood by as a southbound Metrolink train struck his vehicle, causing the train to derail and strike the northbound train," the police chief said.

After crashing into the car, the packed rush-hour train, which was bound for Los Angeles' Union Station, jumped its tracks and jack-knifed over the path of an oncoming commuter train heading in the opposite direction.

One of the stricken trains then side-swiped a stationary freight train that was parked on a siding, finally coming to a stop, the police said.

Carnage ensued. "It sounded like thunder," said Kevin Mendoza, an employee at a nearby wholesale store who called emergency services when he heard the accident. AFP

WRECKAGE of the commuter train crash Jan. 26 in Glendale, California.

India's partnership with Asean has deepened, expanded

By H. Ram

SINGAPORE—If India's engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations has expanded and deepened beyond recognition over the past 12 years, this is quite modest in comparison with the powerful relationship China has forged with the regional grouping.

The level of two-way trade between India and Asean, the latter's seven partners, Japan, China and South Korea, can be taken as rough indicators of the level of economic partnership achieved. For Asean and the three nations together, two-way trade was close to $130 billion in 2004. Nationally the Japanese economy—despite the prolonged recession—has the lion's share in this. For China's economic partnership with Asean is growing rapidly. The two-way trade between Asean and China is now close to $100 billion and the target for 2005 is $ 100 billion.

If Asean and the partnerships and connections it has has developed with outside countries are seen all about ways and means to accelerate economic development, some political subtexts have come on the agenda in recent years. With the induction of two socialist countries, Vietnam (1995) and Laos (1997), a former socialist country still recovering from the ravages of Pol Pottist, Cambodia (1999), and Burma (1997), political diversity has increased within the regional grouping. The two most politically significant changes, however, has experienced over the last two years are (a) the arrival of a professionalized security agenda and set of political concerns that came with 9/11, and (b) the growing weight of China and all it stands for in the Asean scheme of things. Interestingly, China was the first dialogue partner to accede to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia (this happened at the 2003 Asean summit at Bali where a 30-target 'Bali Concord' between the world's most populous country and the regional association was announced). By contrast, Japan's political influence in this region seems to be waning.

As for the new threats, India has the advantage of having traditionally strong relations with the Islamic countries—in distinction to Australia politically, and, more recently, the single-developed cooperation and assistance. Of the three Laos, which is India's country coordinator in Asean, is the smallest and the most in need of economic assistance. With a population of 5.7 million, close to half of whom live in poverty, it has set itself the target of moving out of the "Least Developed Country" category by 2008. Along with Pakistan, it has firmly supported India's candidature for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council. Political feelings toward India are warm and spontaneous by friendly.

India has made a good start by including a specialty oncological hospital, funding for 150 km of power transmission lines, an IT Centre, an entrepreneurship venture as its agenda of development cooperation. But, as the top Lao leaders reminded Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in their meetings with him in Vientiane, the really big investment could come in the field of agriculture, where India, its research institutions and its business community, could contribute a great deal. India would also do well to go ahead and commit itself to the restoration of the Temple World Heritage site of Wat Phu in southern Laos, which goes back to the 5th century A.D. and is a marvelous reminder of the civilizational bond between India and Southeast Asia. The Hindu

Question of the Week

Do you approve of MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando's "wet rag scheme" to minimize jaywalking in the Metro streets! Why or why not!

Senders of a text (E-text) published in Tuesday's InqBox *will, each receive an "Inquirer Mug"!*

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Boy gets what he wants

'I know I talk very fast. That can be a disadvantage. But I work hard. I'm very driven. I drive my staff to the brink of insanity'

AMBITIOUS he embarks on "Homeboy," which he describes as the "next level" of everything he does.

By Marinell R. Cruz

WHATEVER Boy Abunda wants, Boy Abunda gets.

When ABS-CBN offered him last November to host a daily morning show for one season, Boy said he wanted a show he could host for one year.

The Kapamilya network agreed.

"It's not fair for talk show hosts," explained Boy, implying that one season, which is equivalent to only 13 weeks, is not long enough to assess if a show is doing well or not. "I don't call it a one-year contract. It's a one-year commitment."

That is why Boy admitted he is feeling "pressure after a long, long time on television."

Talks too much, too fast

Starting Monday, Boy is hosting "Homeboy," a 45-minute program where the audience will see him "talk more, move around more, and listen more."

"So, I am feeling the pressure," he said. "This show is new to me. It's like I'm starting all over again. It's hard to describe 'Homeboy' to a person. It is a combination of many concepts.

"As a host, I have (also) to acknowledge my weaknesses. I know I talk too much. Any talkmaster on 'eye through the years. That's why I chose the 'Homeboy' (as) a show where I could just listen. I hope to host a participative audience.

"I also know that I talk very fast. That too can be a disadvantage. But I work hard. I'm very driven. I drive my staff to the brink of insanity. I'm very involved in the creative."

Boy said his bosses at ABS-CBN had asked him to do "HomeBoy" as early as November last year. "But I couldn't do it then because of my tight schedule," he said. "But when I found out that I could do advanced tapings for five episodes in two days, I said another show was possible.

"I told them (ABS-CBN bosses), I would listen to what the audience wants. If in six month, the audience would say 'gumulo ito,' we would reevaluate with what we're doing. If not, we'd try to analyze. Pabibirahinlamon ko. Pagbabalikan ang mga shows. Pag-aaralan kung saan kami papunta, based on what the audience feels wanted the show."

Busy, busy

Boy is one of ABS-CBN's busiest talents, hosting "The Buzz" with Bela Padilla every Sunday, "Kumbinsido" every Saturday, and "Private Conversations" every Thursday.

He is also a judge on "Star Circle Quest," which will air its final episode for this year on Saturday.

According to Boy, his new show is basically talk material. "But I also want it to be an inspiring talk show. I don't think there is a talk show that hasn't been done yet. In this show, I intend to talk more to the audience. I intend to move around more. I don't want to be sedentary.

"On 'The Buzz,' I'm a fan, a teenager and a member of the show 'his family. Where I do 'Kumbinsido,' it's the voting booth. Intellectuals, journalist in one who gets into the stories and behind the stories. On 'Private Conversations,' you see the interviewmaster, the person interested in the most interesting and understanding of topics.

"'Homeboy' for me is the sum total of everything I do," he said. "There are things I bring with me to this show. I want to share all the good and bad experiences that I've been through, my being a gumbinyanse at heart and my being a member's boy."

Relationships, beauty

Boy said that in the first episode of "Homeboy," the show would discuss relationships of children with their mothers and caretakers.

"I think it's about time we challenged the role of mothers who are very busy working and yours who sometimes don't know their limitations," he said. "We were able to find a children who openly say they love their yayas more than their moms."

Another topic on "Homeboy" is the common Pinoy attitude toward physical beauty. "There are people who would enroll their children in less expensive schools just so they could afford plastic surgery," said Boy.

"Personally, I don't see us change myself," Boy shared. "I'm scared of liposuction and surgery. What I do is play basketball almost everyday.

"But you know what? When you look at yourself in the mirror everyday, you somehow get to love yourself for whatever you are. You get to do-whap other things about yourself because you know you're not in the mold of the regular beauty. But I believe you can enhance it through personality, attitude, and how good you are in what you do."

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OPINION

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Judicial underworld

EDITORIAL

THERE seems to be a conflict of interpretations of the results of the survey of the Social Weather Stations on judicial corruption. Although one newspaper reported that the survey showed lawyers believing that corruption in the judiciary had lessened compared with 10 years ago, this paper stated otherwise. In any case, if there was a slight improvement in perception, it was negligible. As the SWS press statement said, "Corruption remains a problem."

"Exactly," the judges seemed to say. According to the survey of judges, lawyers have become more corrupt.

What we are treated to here is the sight of judicial professionals not only eyeing one another with suspicion, but throwing mud at each other. Neither side seems to know that mud has been in its domain in the first place; so that each side has plenty of mud for ammunition.

A plague on both their houses! Lawyers and judges seem to be impervious to the deepening disenchantment of the public with the workings of justice. If the survey results are any indication, even legal professionals have become disenchanted with one another, so that they can only put down each other. They violate the underworld rule of honor among thieves, and may yet shame the professional criminals. The ultimate Mafioso does not come to pompous suit-and-cigar, but to judicial robes.

But there's more. The SWS survey disclosed that lawyers felt they couldn't do anything about corruption. "Although half or 49 percent say they know a case in their own city or province where a judge took a bribe, only 6 percent reported the bribery," the SWS firm said. "The main excuse of those who kept silent is that they could not prove it."

Considering this finding, one cannot share the optimism of SWS head Mahar Mangahas on the "slowdown" that the members of the bar supposedly have. The pollster said that the survey showed that corruption "remains a serious problem in the judicial system but it is not endemic," he added: "They're saying there's nothing to be done about [corruption] but it's not accepted. There's still slowdown."

Frankly, we can't see any slowdown there. What we see is resignation and cooptation. The negligible percentage of lawyers who said they reported the bribery of judges means that lawyers would rather go along with the corruption current rather than fight it. Our law schools seem to have produced lawyers without spine and ethics. It seems that for all their long years of study of legal jurisprudence and the intricacies of the law, our law graduates have become so overwhelmed by legal scholarship and technicality that they arrive at a point of stagnancy whenever they are confronted with blatant acts of corruption. To expose or not to expose? To oppose or not to oppose? The Hamletesque dilemma, of course, seems to have been resolved in the direction of stasis. The SWS survey should support the call for a reexamination not only in our law schools, but also in our law graduates for 10 years. Our civil law schools are filling the bar with lemons.

The corruption of lawyers and judges—and the gutlessness of members of the bar against graft—are reasons enough to despair about any hope for reforming the system of justice in the Philippines. If all that lawyers could do about judicial corruption is to be sensitive about it—to turn away and let things be but also tell pollsters that they are "idealistic" and frown on bribery and extortion—then there's no hope for justice in this country. So, there's no hope for this country, period.

If lawyers cannot turn up evidence that would stand in court to prove that a judge had extorted money to render a favorable decision, or another lawyer had bribed a judge, then how much less would ordinary people be in a position to produce the evidence and make a strong case against corruption? Should the public have any reason to hope for the coming of good government and a fair administration of justice with lawyers who slink away at the sight of corruption?

One suspects, of course, that the weak-kneed response of lawyers to the corruption of their fellow members of the bar is true to form of the legal establishment that seems to mask its depredations under the veneer of legal proprieties, avenues of honor, and correct deportment. Alas, our lawyers seem to have made a mockery of the law they have sworn to uphold. When the lawyers become the lawless, justice cannot be dispensed. Our lawyers have run off with the law, and we are left with nothing but legal gibberish and lawyer's thunder—all signifying nothing.

Pasig ferry may help ease land traffic

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

A LITTLE bit of good news in an otherwise bleak situation, like a ray of sunshine during a cloudy day, is the announcement that the government will review the ferry service in the Pasig River, something that this column has been urging since 1999. The ferry was greatly convenient to the thousands of workers of Metro Manila and shorten travel time from Manila to points east.

The Pasig River, as well as its tributaries and estuaries, was a major highway for both passengers and cargo long before we were subjugated by the land vehicles powered by the internal combustion engine. It is still a useful highway in the same way that Thailand and Australia are using their waterways (the former's number of Thailand is among the most) to their economic benefit.

A ferry service was attempted earlier or twice but all failed for a number of reasons: the water vessels fielded were small and low in the water so that passengers were soaked to board them; and, more absurd, they couldn't help but stare at the wildly moving bridges. Besides, by the time the boat was docketing and avoiding the hundreds of barnacles, long lines of squatters shanties along the banks with people defecating into the water, and piles of trash everywhere.

Because of these difficulties, my view was that low bridges opening it, and the style of the water, the ferry boats should be of shallow draft and should have air-conditioning to keep the smell out. The ferry boats of Disney World in Orlando, Florida, have the same features of the Pasig ferry but I would make a good modified. They are of shallow draft, just right for the shallow waters of the Pasig, and are air-conditioned with the front and back doors open for windows.

But even with this done issue, a ferry service might still fail if the passengers are the same depressing sights along the banks. Along with the ferry, the national government and the local governments units should develop the right-of-way along the banks as result, the same way Mayor Lito Atienza is developing the Manila riverbanks into river walks.

The officials have to remember around the world enough to see how other countries have made use of their rivers. In Sydney, Australia, there is a ferry service from downtown along the river to the sea. Both banks have been transformed into scenic parks. The tourist expressive features line the river. You can watch a concert in the Sydney Opera House, take the ferry home at midnight, and be home in a few minutes.

In the United States, notably in San Antonio, Texas, and New Orleans, the riverbanks have been developed into entertainment and leisure spots. And in Europe, all the major rivers are tourist attractions with ferryboats taking tourists on river cruises. Any other country with a major river running through its major metropolis, like the Pasig running below Manila, will not hesitate to develop it for tourism.

But the banks of our Pasig River can hardly be attractive to tourists. They are the ugly backyards of families which dump their garbage and many the squatters carry waste to hide there. Squatter shanties also line the banks like a festering sore.

The should develop the banks into scenic all the way to Laguna Lake. The owners of any shanties that are in the way should be given a piece of their backyards or within the areas. After all, the value of their properties will rise. Instead of just being their backyards, those properties will have another frontage.

And oh, the governments should also clean the waterways of squatters, other who themselves passing under will emerge with their souls loosened with garbage, the same way relevant water become like a garbage dump when they pass through a highly urbanized city.

Traveling by boat across the metropolis is much more relaxing and cooler than traveling the boat and thus escaped up in a majority of that, for long through a rifle. Before the Central Road to Cavite was constructed, there was a ferry service from Lahuyo in Cavite City that took workers to and from their homes and jobs. We used to take this ferry on late afternoons from Manila to Cavite and back just to relax, sipping cold beer on deck during the trip. The ferry was always crowded when the road was finished, but it is now an almost wide road. By that the ferry service should be restored.

In fact, the Pasig River ferry should later be extended to Laguna Lake (until a boulevard built around the lake) to service the lakeshore towns.

Another project that I have repeatedly been urging is that one of both banks of the Talisman, Tanguisson River from Manila Bay through Malabon, or Valenzuela as anyone. It flood control project and development—the artificial river is of this at it is logical to run the concrete tops of the dikes into roads to provide commuters with another highway besides the congested MacArthur Highway. That elevated ramp system from isolating their shanties on the banks of the river. It will also help solve the traffic problem since it, and people from traveling their garbage into the river and making it their own private cesspool. With roads lining the banks, the value of adjoining lot would appreciate and the owners would have another source of frontage, and the local governments can collect more in real estate taxes.

Then another ferry service can connect motorists and tourists to Manila and the Pasig River and Cavite ferry service.

Surveys: the new oracles of law

PASSION FOR REASON

Raul C. Pangalangan

JUSTICE holmes said that law is anything but a prediction of what the courts in fact will do, and that no sense can to the "readers of the law" the record of past decided cases, so long as no room that prophetic mission. Today in an age when court decisions are said to be unpredictable, we have turned instead to pellmell surveys to help us find our way.

As an urban banks do I say that court decisions are unpredictable? I relied on Social Weather Stations (SWS) surveys, of course! Had I been due to Holmes, I would have turned to the Supreme Court Reports Annotated (or SCRA), a reference to a line of cases—never terminus! whether the Court had been consistent or whether it had done doctrinal "flip-flops." But no, in the age of surveys, I consulted lawyers and turned to two SWS polls. In the 2004-05 and 2003 surveys, respectively, of over three lawyers and one of every two judges and that court decisions were "unpredictable." Objectionably there was a small rise in the number of law believers among the judges: 50 percent agreed with the statement unfavorable in 2003, but only 43 percent in 2005.)

The most SWS study of the judiciary and the legal profession was released earlier this week, showing "some improvement but also survey setting problems" in the integrity survey of 400 lawyers and 100 trial judges.

The first problem with surveys about anything is you lawyers do not like to read numbers, and doubt whatever counts those numbers may mean. Indeed, had they been good with numbers, they might have gone to medical school or business school instead. They are taught that there are three kinds of lies: "lies, damned lies, and statistics." The rules of evidence are geared toward questioned evidence, a witness or of facts, a story that only leaves a human judge better than pages of charts and diagrams. The fun-size statistics were used before the US Supreme Court was such a momentous event that the attorneys actually were almost public health data to uphold a homicide laws and said that congress had validly exercised with the liberty to interfere of both employer and employee...it now called the Brandeis brief, and he ended has since become the famous Justice Louis Brandeis. I can therefore imagine lawyers, looking at the survey panel of 400 lawyers, and ask: Access asked on, or with what about the 1,500 other lawyers, didn't you ask them, too?

Subjecting the courts to popular surveys would have been unthinkable in the past. As Supreme Court Justice Artemio Panganiban said yesterday in his address during the Philippine Association of Trial Lawyers' meeting in Antipolo, there was a time when the highest court "was shrouded in mystery[,] in proceedings as remote, its sessions private, and its members secluded from public scrutiny." Today, "the doors of the judicial fortress have been partially opened[,] the gods ... a bit more accessible[,] their work ... subjected to more rigid public scrutiny."

This is a giant step forward but we must tread with caution.

In our pure Hanson democracy, we have installed Aristotle's wisdom that if you want to know it's done for, ask not the expert doctrinal, ask the man who wears the shoe. Whether before, with Gregg's "subjects and conditions of the law and Justice Bengzibar's Olympian gods such pure in judging the courts, today the lay public has asserted itself as a stakeholder by insurgent that the courts cannot be ineffective in the community's point of parties. A judge who is not attuned to public opinion faces his credibility and legitimacy.

I am, however, wary of popular by surveys of non-political institutions. First of all, survey results are with subjective perceptions, and with objective conditions, the same dissonance, I would, between consumers' things as they and phenomena things as they appear to be). For instance, the SWS had two separate questions on corruption, one on "tendencies of corrupt judicial personnel" and another on "awareness of judicial bribery." The first deals with personal impressions about your personnel, the second with actual knowledge of corruption—two entirely different things. If the problem being addressed is your perception, then what is the solution? Good public relations programs? The SWS also asked about "the usual pace of civil cases from the time a case is submitted for decision." Too slow, said 63 percent of the lawyers and only 9 percent of the judges. Again, the difference—whose view to side, those waiting for the decision are said to be less patient than those who have to write it.

Second and more fundamentally, all branches of government—the President, Congress and the courts—are subject to the same average people, but the courts are the hardest to account only to specific ways. We, the average people, disapprove of our elected leaders by not voting for them during elections, but we disapprove of judges by disobeying their reasoning and by arguing against the behavior of their clients.

Petitions may condemn the courts simply because they do not like the outcome of their cases, and not because the decisions are wrong in law. Thus, they can rule but we need not listen. We must listen only if the criticism is addressed to the quality of the court's reasoning and the legal basis for its moral claims. In the words of Justice Panganiban, "[o]ur people no longer accept judicial decisions only for no understood. Neither do their minds solve complaints that decision explain their rationale."

Surveys subject the courts on a popularity contest where the judges normally try to stay on the good side of the public, and politically correct, lately dating to stand for the political. It disheartened. Those who uses the words "Rule of Law and Democracy" in our heads simply do not understand how the hybrid of law is to endure the opposite from the "boiling during."

Comments to raul.pangalangan@up.edu.ph

A case study for coup plots

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

(1) GMA: Edgardo Espiritu planned to unseat his boss to the John Marshall era (Jan. 26, 2004), hoping to spark a landslide of militant defections from the government of President Joseph Estrada. The plan was for him to issue a signal to his troops in waiting, including 700 marines deployed at the Ulilio Special Operations Group in Fort Bonifacio on the eve of Camp Aguinaldo, upon instruction by ranks, and stage a dramatic exclusion that the media of an expected new commander manned in person at the scene.

The digital news came. Espiritu's D-Day fizzled out. It was interrupted by the announcement on Jan. 15 by Chief of Staff Gen. Angelo Reyes of the military high command's withdrawal of support from Estrada. Reyes beat Espiritu to the draw by one day.

Espiritu's called was one of those half-cocked groups in the Armed Forces and the Philippine National Police that had been hatching plotting supposedly the overthrow of Estrada for different reasons and at different times. Espiritu's plot, in connection with Cops (Philippine Council for Public Affairs), was the most flamboyant. In his interview published by the inquirer last Jan. 26, Espiritu said the marines at Ulilio were just a "reserve group," but what he had in mind were elite regiment specifically for "urgent special signal."

All these conspiratorial groups had one serendipitous moment: that an acquittal of Estrada by the impeachment tribunal at the Senate could trigger massive demonstrations that would provide the opportunity to find large-scale military defections to tilt the army from Estrada's government. Strong signs were appearing during the second half of December 2000 that the tribunal would acquit Estrada of the impeachment charges.

By mid-December no one was certain about the outcome of the trial. The planners, including Espiritu's group, made plans in the midst of the fluidity and volatility of events. Their circumstances made plans clunky and vulnerable to the slightest change in circumstances. It was like drawing plans on sand being washed by waves. In a post-operation, retired Gen. Jose Almonte, who was tracking info for the palace and it himself, a source-a coup plotter to Jacob L. told me that earlier plans of the Espiritus group had failed to get the support of the troops and that was why it decided "to have the issue be-transparent to false" to be-settled, on "no pretext-not General Reyes and to have unique military defenses."

Almonte pointed out that the group's military capability was severely limited. Their sources were mainly with deputy commanders, not the commanders of the troops. Hence, whose support it created is a successful coup.

After the lamb of the Espinosa group were found by the political explosion over the sealed envelopes won't 8 Day on Jan. 20, the plan for Espinosa to march to the defense side, in the metropolis for Gen. Ariel Querubin, the deputy commander of the Air Force, to fly over Edsa to give a signal to Lt. Gen. Arturo Cadilla, commander of the Northern Luzon Command, and his deputy, Brig. Gen. Alfredo Lim, to declare their support with their units and other armed units to Edsa.

Reyes on Jan. 18 had gotten wind of the movements of the Espinosa group and had its first talk on steps to strengthen support in the chain of command for the defense of the palace.

Apart from the badly planning and hyperambition for his plot, Espinosa was hardly the charismatic and inspiring figure to mount a coup. During the planning, Espinosa was commander of the 903rd Engineer Brigade of the Philippine Army, a post considered to be sidelined while the political crisis over Estrada was intensifying. Reyes had relieved him as commander of the strategic Southern Command after he had a brush with young Sen. Jinggoy Estrada. Although Espinosa was commander of the Marines, his training at the staff college was not strategic for rallying support from the strategic three commanders in the field.

In an extensive political environment conducive to coup conspiracies, the failed Espinosa coup plot ought to offer a case study on why a coup succeeds or fails.

Compassion, courage and war

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

IT was good to see two columns yesterday from Conrado Bryce and Manuel Quezon III, about the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Asia-Pacific Holocaust, one of several that commemorate camps where Jews and other "social undesirables" (for example, Gypsies, communists and homosexuals) were incarcerated and executed.

Some time back, I wrote about the need for more awareness in the Philippines to counteract the sheer ignorance that eventually brought an end to World War II. That solution also dealt with the cowardice and cruelty that went with war, and not necessarily from the "bad guys" alone, i.e., the Japanese and the Germans.

The theme of the previous several departments reminded me about the need to write about the other faces of war, about courage and compassion, in particular. This is especially important for the Philippines, where the public consciousness seem to be limited to defiance (e.g., the Bill of Rights and the fall of Corruption) followed by volcanic silence about the Filipino capacity for compassion, including the important role of the Philippine Red Cross. It's almost as if those years didn't matter until, voila, the Americans returned to "liberate" us.

Free gift

Sure, we get an occasional action film plumbing some grave history. Ferdinand Marcos, for one, made sure his biographical movie had him beating large as a rock for numerous trades. It does not hurt to film those stories even grossly much historians.

The other action films today's the war to an exchange of gunfire, with corresponding cut-and-cut of trenches and simulating the enemy's dead bodies. The Americans presented many tens of these action films and I remember growing up on a line of "Combat," a long running television series with Vic Morrow and other returning battle after battle against the Germans.

Much to my little is said about other heroes—the women and men who did their share not necessarily by bearing arms. I've written about the Christmas when Germans and Allied forces declared, on their own, a ceasefire, surrounding each other with Christmas carols. Now that's one fun, no?

The real deliverer was Bonifacio family—but it's young Amanda girl, Anne Frank, the teenager who wrote a diary that story and recently one of many families that took similar risks.

Recently there was the story of a young Italian doctor who had several Jews confined to the hospital where he worked and taught them to feign some symptoms suspicious illness which he could not cure. He was highly decorated. That play obviously kept the Germans away during the lines.

I'd like to hear more local stories of your girl, of how guerrillas and other underground fighters were kept hidden and protected by the civilian populations, and how civilians conducted themselves in the face of invaders and people who delivered food and arms to the fighters.

Instead, too, were those who kept hospitals and school running. I am certain there are many lost stories about the doctors and female professionals who found ways to stay past the fighters, and also improvised and used their scarce resources to "manufacture" the pills.

Many years back, while doing research on nutritional plants, I found a compilation of herbal remedies prepared by the late Dr. Jaime Zulueta which they used in the Philippine General Hospital. That included common roots as medicines. They had to do that because of the occupation, which couldn't be too young or too old because there was a specific level of ingredients like potassium and sodium that was needed. Now don't interrupt, no.

Compassion

My important case needs to be made, in the crediting of stories from the war, of courage and compassion from it is a necessary base that spells value. And if we learn to understand that, we will then be more alert as well to the many instances of malignancies that were redefined during the war.

It was compassion that pushed one-time refugees to present needs, helpless and hopeless, to the care of the enemies. War widespread in Europe now before the Nazis' first opposite, so it was a triumph of the human spirit whenever was Jews sheltered here.

I'm also intrigued by the emergence of stories of how soldiers humanized war's intense dehuman of "enemy foe" and "enemies." Even the Japanese and Germans where troops in Europe declared their own point.

In his book, "The Road to the Ghetto," Jon Nordan writes about how during World War II and the Vietnam War, American soldiers often did not like or the enemy (to their credit) by the enemy because General Dwight D. Eisenhower viewed thousands of those last infantrymen who served during World War II, and estimates only 15 to 20 percent of those soldiers actually shot to kill. The others would not fire, or aim or fired too high.

Such accounts have led us to think harder about who we are as human beings, after all, to have the compassion not to shoot as the enemy may have been even more dangerous since their pulling the trigger.

I am also there are also stories of compassion within concentration camps, of inmates helping each other, maybe even of inmates helping guards. Those stories will help us to make us reflect on how complicated humans can be, as in the case of the prisoners in Auschwitz whose lives were spared because they could play classical music. They played on orders of the Nazi camp masters. Was it compassion? Maybe yes, maybe no, but one needs to think, too, of those who remains lived and died in the camps' orchestras.

There are now stories that will never be told, since the survivors are now long dead. But if we mind also harder, we might be able to spot some of those stories, from actual tales of the survivors (including our own children) or from their letters and diaries. Or from accounts like Alfred Fraser's memoir through Europe and defiance the Germans in terror after battle. And yet the most powerful acute wasn't the victory marches but of a would-be soldier's heart, of his resolve to kill, of his reasons for doing so, and of his return to civilian life.

But reading the signposts and rules of some like and studying courage and compassion, we might be better able to prevent that ultimate human inanity called war.

Tune in to the BBC special about Auschwitz on Saturday at 2:00 p.m. and Sunday at 1:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m., including a segment featuring Survivor," following fame Leader Mayflock, a member of the Ladies Orchestra that saved her life, in the written Hendricks.

Helping mothers and their children

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

WITHIN THE WOMEN'S movement, and even outside it, a common strain is that women could become "empowered" if they became convinced of their independence. Can women be their own best empowerment, and from there, be liberated from the systems and institutions of the men in their lives, they will also begin a journey toward self-respect, self-esteem and self-actualization.

While this will largely be true, what many forget is that neighboring women, without giving them the support services they need, would mean only adding to the many burdens they already bear. Women who work outside the home, especially if they are single parents, need more than mere moral support to cope with the day.

Obviously, the answer is not just jobs or income-generating opportunities for women, although these are important. They can certainly boost a woman's self-esteem. To complete the picture, women also need help with housework and child care, enough leisure time to look after their own needs, and a supportive political and social environment that will enable them to reconcile their various roles and to participate in public life.

* * *

With about seven years gone, I have set on the path of the Women's Crisis Center (WCC) and Women's Health and Development (WHD) in Rosario, Cavite. KMDC started out as an innovative approach to the organization of women workers in sari-saris, whose fluctuating members and fluid working hours have put a damper on the efforts of many groups to reach out to traditional organizing through face-to-face meetings difficult and unwieldy.

Through the organizing work of the National Federation of Sugar Workers, the women's desk (now Center) of the Federation of Free Farmers, and other groups, KMDC was initially set up in Rosario to provide women workers a place to gather after work, share experiences and undergo gender-awareness and other skills training. A similar center was established in San Isidro City, in answer to the needs of the young women workers who dominate the canning factories, but financial constraints, and difficulties in their recruitment in organizing a body of workers scattered in many employments, led to the Rosario center's closure.

MANAGEMENT of the day-to-day affairs of KMDC rests in the hands of two trained women, both former factory workers: Wenilyn "Lena" Gonzales, who used to work in sari-saris in Cavite, and Elenita Bano, who used to work in a garment factory.

At the KMDC based meeting the other day we all had a rollicking time listening to Lenita's and Elenita's stories about the children under their care and the mothers they have to deal with. As Elenita, the senior, told each participant we had to struggle not to show our emotions.

The "women culture" as Marjorie Roncesvalles, chief of PPSSC, puts it, breeds invisibility and insecurity in the lives of the women workers, who recognize above all, practically all the tasks that 60,000 members in the Center foresee. Between comments are so short and demand, remain, the workers are hard put to stick by a schedule, while planning for the future is unbearable.

* * *

THOUGH the parents are expected to pick up the children after working hours, says Lenita, it's not unusual to have a child or two spend the night at the Center. Or, as Elenita put it, the mothers to wait call so when their have to go on forced overtime I'm more an urgent queue to get more friend, so we know when to expect them. Because while a child is with us, we have to make sure that the mothers or fathers to come and fetch the child."

Lenita and Marilou lately have with very when I told them about the daycare centers in Pasig, which charge parents a minimum of P5 for the first 30 minutes of delay in picking up a child, and P1 for every minute after.

Through the years, Lenita and Marilou and the staff have found themselves having to do the simple things and challenging, from coddling a toddler to cleaning up a child's diaper mouth ("you'll be surprised how quickly children learn to pick up dirty words"), from teaching children to share to dealing with the case of a child learning up with fever or the lavish excuse.

But all their work has produced immeasurable gains. The children, it is reported, "are now cleaner, healthier, more emotionally open and articulate." Family violence has been greatly improved. Where before children were left in the province with grandparents or other kin, now the center allows working mothers time to interact and bond with their children. The women in turn have gained new skills, confidence and you read up helping their children, too.

Natural wonders in our forests

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

WOOD is something we encounter every day. Most is so common that we see it but rarely take the time to notice.

After the landslides in Quezon last year and the talk of logging in the Philippine forests, and subsequent... you realize that many of our mountains have really been denuded. Look at our mountains and hills, once covered green with forest now look like bare, brunt-end. There remains a great demand for wood, and the forests are the source. Before steel and bronze for our furnace or our imported wood like oak or cherry, why deplete our forests when we can cultivate wood from other countries first?

Each time I enter a newly constructed house in Makati or Forbes Park, I am struck by the shiny hardwood floors. I cannot help but wonder that the old semblance the hotspot-to-have specimens or northern, it will cost and well in the 21st century. The wonderful choice is one has or is frustrating to find large-scale hardwood specimens. Imagine how many trees were cut to make the narra and ebonized furniture made from them. As late as four decades ago, old, dry and specific pieces for hardwood was called in to relegate pieces of sculpture by modern masters like Napoleon Abueva, Anastacio Caedo, Guillermo Tolentino, and younger wood artists who make wonderful modern furniture. Dominador Espiritu, Claudio Bautista and Jhoy Reyes.

Different types of Philippine wood are described in Leandro Fernandez's book on the Philippines published in Paris in 1846. Reading the descriptions of different types of wood he found in these made me realize that this work was taken from a travel guide for the would-be traveler who anywhere wanted to go beyond Europe was beyond the pale of civilization. Fernandez provided a guide for business men who wanted to invest in the Philippines or Philippine products. He also provided the tantalizing hint of the wood because many of these did not have European names or at the time of his writing used a term found of other countries, imports, European, mahogany, molave, ironwood, ipil, lauan, narra, tindalo, etc.

Molina even provided specific uses for specific types of wood. Molave was good for framing and ginger because it was inexpensive. Mangachapuy was known to grow long and high and was ideal for masts for large ships. Guijo was known to be used for the construction of houses. Molave was made into bridges, and the wood was also used for cannon balls. Lauan was used for making chairs, tables, and large armoires, painted over to resemble fine wood. Narra was used for flooring, both in houses and ships. Molave and narra were also used for making ships' keels and large pieces of houses. Molave was made into furniture, frigate and molave were luxury woods that resembled ebony; they were black or teak black streaks and were made into tables.

Lucban, capital of wood and other uses that being made into chairs, trunks and tables. Among others learned was like incense. The wood of Mary or incense-like wood inexpensively into the most famous bell or buffalo. If you use it to the core. The bark of adarna, when pulverized and mixed with lime, killed all the fish and made fishing easier. Lime secretes drainage of the poison did not affect humans. Ambayan was made for if taken, to both produced blood for the intestine and wood has used as tables were a substitute for camp Quinn and super-thickness were used to pull off wood and the house, which in Philippine buildings it used to be the home of supernatural creatures, provided good timber. In homes and bark could be made into fishing nets.

Sarsaw and bangarangs would be made into timber, and if you had an enemy, the sap from that could when applied on the skin caused it to swell, and I presume, itch to hell. Balanos (when burned and the smoke inhaled) was said to be a cure for asthma, as a salad of four to five servs. I am serious about the bagonbohlan was described as "sarsaparilla tree under which the native used to build their [presumably religious ceremonies]. In fact, bigger trees were used as a shelter for the gods. Lumbang was a source to renew baby ages; when it is ripe, it is as interesting as to be extinguish wine. The fruit also gives oil-oil used as incentive for making inks (do we count that it being done?

Many of these species are unused and done some research because aside from trees be mentioned some medicinal plants on which he provided personal, first hand information. Leaves of camphor brewed and applied were a cure for boils. Bark of the tree called tuba (not the coconut, nothing but that the wrong eating flour) prevented diarrhea. By analogy, if one rubbed it on the body mosquitoes was a cure for headaches. Leaves that when eaten as a decoction cured fever and worm and bark. Tuba was also used as a cure for snake bites. A specific for the sickness of the palate. Molina did not realize that the name of the plant, "malakdang", was perhaps is due to its properties. He may the same made with the plant and it sometimes used to cure.

He did however like Malabar's name given to it. Its prior because they contain obstacles or native information. Perhaps we should read their again if only to appreciate what natural wonders is man in our midst.

* * *

Comments are welcome at opcomp@inquirer.edu.ph.

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PNP teeming with psycho cops?

THE AUTHOR-BOOK statement of Director General Edgar Aglipay, chief of the Philippine National Police, that the tragic Ampatuan massacre is an isolated incident runs counter to what is actually happening.

Recently, the case of a police-official stalking drunk drivers against a parcer was brought prominently to his attention. Complaints about policemen who put on a campaign, shooting and mauling innocent civilians, are so common that the keyboard strokes of lawmakers like Ramon Tulfo, Add ar-t-ha the invaluable videotaped evidence of cops caught red-handed shooting shells of gang-raping minors under their custody, and you ask why those horrible images of the PNP stick in the public mind.

Come among those numbers our personal experience. At the conference organized by the Bar Bonus of the Philippines (BBP) held in Makiling, Laguna last Dec. 10, 2009, we saw policemen at the Public Attorneys' Bureau stately armed to counter parents expressing fears to visit their children. When our turn came, we explained that we were from the Ongpin (wealthy bureau) to take our subtitle back to Manila that afternoon. Confident that we could not possibly encounter any problems since we were conducting government business, we presented our ID's passed designating us to hold letters at "Bailiwick Hall" (the same as those issued to the policemen).

To our shock, the police officer in charge frowned. "Di kayo makakapasok. Sobrang pula ng mga tulisan! Kapag dumaan pa yan, mag-bago ang isip ng mga tao sa loob." Taga-Pagsan ka kaya? While talagal Kapag dumaan pa yan, Mahihirapang ako! Ang gulo na lang dapa'y kumalit. (You can't go in, your passes are nothing. You're from Pagsan? We're really suspicious! You just came back at 11 p.m.)" like a pack of laughing hyenas, they mocked and ridiculed a government agency with a battalion of embarrassment barrel and subjected us to public humiliation for no apparent reason.

We did not allow ourselves to be provoked. We contacted the BBP coordinator on our cell phones. We, even after the BBP had given instructions to let us through, they still detained us. Only after we contacted their superior a certain Hong-Sing, were we allowed to go into the barracks site. We were straight on the BBP coordinator to ask why the policeman of our visitable that allowances was rescheduled at 11 p.m. He gave us convoluted look and talked such that no one were assured.

Obviously, the policemen tried to delay at one of some petulant sense of humor, knowing we would be deprived of sleep and not on the long drive back to Manila. Probably, these "psycho cops" were gleefully hoping to indirectly kill us in a while after midnight.

In the future, we hope the Lawyers organizers will no longer rely on those people who exhibit circulating mental behavior and who obviously don't even know the meaning of "public assistance."

—EILEEN L. MARQUEZ and KEVIN L. GIRON, public information and international affairs staff, Pagsan General Office, 1/F Science Garden, Agham Road, Quezon City

CHR also prosecutes lawless armed groups

IT may be observed that the opinion expressed in the letter "Selective Human Rights Commission" (PDI, 1/23/10) was a very encouraging statement. It was made on the performance of the CHR and, thus, might have undermined public trust and confidence in this constitutional office.

Records will bear out that several cases of blatant and gross human rights violations committed by the 105th Brigade and other lawless armed groups have been investigated, resolved and referred to the proper authorities and quasi-judicial bodies which have jurisdiction over them. Government parties, if they want to, are given easy access to the records of these cases, for reference and information—in the spirit of transparency.

These cases include the Cabuntalan mass rape and looting in Zamboanga City, the Ipil pillage, Tiruray clothing kidnapping, Dr. Bloss Evangelista's killing, Lanzaan siege, Bincungan, Bebuke beheadings, Kalaong massacre, among others.

Of the cases that had been brought to the attention of this regional office, it's probably twelve disappearances of the 105th Brigade, the three Islamic liberation Front and twelve armed groups that commanded. The 21 cases do not include those involving government forces, which incidentally, are more numerous.

We hope that the letter writer-lawyer will likely upon request could put our office a visit and browse through our case records so he could dispel his doubts about our performance.

—MARCELO B. MARAVILLA, Director I, Commission on Human Rights, Western Mindanao Regional Office, Zamboanga City

LETTERS

2004 SSS pensions sent

THE pensions to the latest "SSS in financial crisis, or simply mathematics?" (PDI, 1/21/10).

In his letter, Eduardo L. Garcia said, "Unfortunately, as of this writing, I still have to receive my SSS ID card. I have not to receive my pension for the month of September, October and November. It's already December and I am afraid I will not receive my October pension, too."

Records show that Garcia's monthly pensions up to November 2009 had been remitted to his savings account with the Philippine National Bank, Tabuk Branch.

The pensions was suspended pending confirmation; didn't a program that requires the pensioner to submit a medical form to verify his membership and ensure that he gets the proper benefits is the right thing.

In December 2004, the SSS suspended the program and reviewed its implementation. Garcia was among his pensions in his reactivated by Feb. 15, 2005. His pension for January and February 2005 will be credited to his account in due time.

Our records also show that Garcia's ID was mailed to him on Dec. 10, 2009.

We are aware of the plight of our pensioners and hope they will use their pensions for their medical expenses and other needs. Please be assured that the SSS is working hard to strengthen the life of the fund and ensure that all its members get the right benefits at the right time.

—ADELE PALACIOS, assistant vice president, Media Affairs, Social Security System, East Avenue, Diliman, QC

A historical irony

IT is ironic that within our military camp in Fort Bonifacio, a main street is named in honor of Gen. Henry Lawton, the leader/captor of the legendary native American Apache leader Geronimo, who surfaced the American Army in many battles of resistance against the White Americans' forcible occupation of native American land, an issue touching the highest point of his military career with the capture of the Apache chief, Geronimo, who led the Apache "Indians" in William McKinley to destroy the Filipino armed struggle for independence.

In his book, "History of the Filipino People," Teodoro A. Agoncillo is most sure "Henry Ashley" assisted in partner legislation, but General Otis ordered him to take a rest in Malolos, Mountains, found a cave, and Geronimo was captured by the engineering Lagasca, Tanner, and Diamond Bus, all in Cavite. On the other hand, General Wheaton, aided by gunboats, successively captured Lt. Lawton and Pathfinder, in Morong, and Isaac Cruz, Bono, and other towns of Laguna. But the Americans were not always victorious. On March 31, Filipinos under a general command of Generals Lawton and Wheaton

General Wheaton at Polo and killed Colonel Egbert. In Quingua, (Pharsalia), on April 23, the intelligent cunning leader Miguel Malvar forced a defeat in the hands of General Gregorio del Pilar. In this battle, the Americans suffered heavy casualties, including Colonel Egbert—suffering who was killed in battle. On December 18, 1899, the Filipinos under General Lawton Geronimo ruined the Americans under General Lawton, who was killed in the battle of Pasong Tirad.

Seems like the smoking-gun of history Lawton, the conqueror of Indian Apache chief Geronimo was himself killed by a Filipino Revolution fighter, Gen. Llanera Gerardino.

Why name within our formal Service military camp in Fort Bonifacio an American who fought so hard against the Filipinos? Why not instead honor our Filipino generals, Llanera Geronimo, who fought to defend and obtain our independence?

Because Lawton Street in Gen. Llanera Geronimo Street in Fort Bonifacio.

—LEONARDO DE VERA, epidemiologist, 6 Sanz, Legal Pandan dan till Kommune

Crime-infested corner

LET the cat the attention of the Philippine National Police precinct which has jurisdiction of the Edsa Buendia intersection.

I do understand that we are in an economic slump, and it is but logical that the crime rate goes up at these times.

I do believe that most of our countrymen who are experiencing reduced poverty are doing their best to survive. That is why it brings smile as my lips whenever I hear people complaining about the heat (since me) are breaking their backs to keep cool (air conditioning).

What I don't like are those who turn insane "compensation"—if I may call that—to the expense of others.

I have been held up at knife's point for the first time. I lost my cell phone and wrangler (a Christian thing), and I'm lucky that I was not shot (all fresh my wife). The place is the Edsa Buendia service southbound side, just before the pedestrian overpass of the MRT station. I have heard that the area is but becoming notorious because of similar incidents.

I suggest increasing police visibility in that area especially at nighttime.

—JESUS GONZALES, 6 TYDAP Bldg., Buendia Ave., Sel.Air, Makati City

On 'wet-flag' campaign

I PAID Antonio Aglaua as the treasurer of Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay and the other mayors on the latest efforts of Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chair Bayani "BF" Fernando to ease traffic in Metro Manila. Mayor Binay was once the chair of the MMDA, his (can't recall any trouble projects he did there.

But back to Fernando's accomplishments (now Jinx go to Cebun, part in time

fly as the center of Edsa and Ayala Boulevard. Wow! I would say "any gifting friend (can't it only for what he has done in Cebun, I would vote for Fernando for any political position. Bulagang may engagement Jeong me (That guy can really do something). What about the other mayors of metro Manila?—Avelino E. Ralmos, Legal Dept., Saudi Aramco Gulf Operations, P.O. Box 256, Al-Khobar 31971, Saudi Arabia

* * *

I applaud the efforts of Fernando in trying to install into the minds of our pedestrians and drivers some semblance of discipline. That is long overdue, and I do support his efforts.

However, I have a suggestion with regard to the taking of pictures of violators violating traffic rules. Please don't leave discretion in the hands of traffic aides so that the picture-taking would be free from "human error" which could only become a source of corruption.

Secondly, the "wet rag" drive might cause some poor folk and pedestrians to get sick. Just imagine somebody contaminating the wet rag with a contagious virus, and there you are, the next one to get hit by the rag. There are other laws to properly enforce our traffic rules.—Adelia Cuen, 7738 Midday Lane, Alexandria, VA 22306 USA

* * *

The "wet rag" concept actually never. I would prefer that, if the above motive is going as rewind and fined. It is also less expensive for the government. I love what Fernando has been doing for Metro Manila. As a one who thinks outside the box and a very proactive in that sense, I wish we leaders would emulate Fernando.—Jose Orosco, Colombia, Laguna

* * *

Obviously, the ones who oppose the "wet flag" campaign are a bunch of BIR chasing at points—frustrating for motorists).

I also find ridiculous the statement of the Commission on Human Rights to those who are "victimized" by the wet-flag drive to file a case with that agency. Is the CHR chair that publicity hungry?

To our "hahahopong," please cooperate. If we find the wet flag approach "archaic," that the simple solution is to recognize our crimes. One must be enough for a wise person. But where all "diplomacy" has been exhausted, then it's time to serve the wet flag.—Simon Serrano, Unit 1B/B, Sarmiento Bldg., Libertad Street, Mandaluyong City

* * *

I genuinely agree that we need a hundred more Fernandos in our government to steer backseaty make our country a better, safer and more agreeable place to live in. Fernando is seemingly searching for ways and means (some officials, some not) to make us aware of our obligation to properly use our public roads and sidewalks.

Those who have been to civilized countries—like the one where I live now (the Principality of Monaco) must have noticed that Filipinos there are well-behaved and are well-disciplined and very observant of the law.

Disciplining Manilans looks like an impossible dream.

While politicians, "pseudo-leaders" who pretend to champion the cause of the poor and defend human rights, think the MMDA's "wet flag" drive is ludicrous when, in fact, they don't know what barbaric means.—Lisa Alcantara, 7 Rue St. Augustin 06300 Nice, France

VOICES ON INQ7.NET

Across the NATION

FAN
A Kenalo student from Pagsa City rries out this garment made of buri, which is exclusively used for manufacturing fans. The student performs after the city's fourth longganiza festival.

21 DENR men suspended following lumber seizure

By Jhunnex Napallacan and Connie Fernandez
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Environment Secretary Mike Defensor yesterday ordered the 90-day suspension of at least 21 environment personnel in Cebu and Davao Oriental pending investigation of their liability in the smuggling of P4.5 million worth of illegally cut lumber seized in Mandaue City on Monday.

Suspended were 21 personnel of the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (Penro) and Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (Cenro) in Cebu and nine from Davao Oriental.

Defensor said these Penro and Cenro personnel would face administrative charges for gross negligence in the performance of duty for the smuggling of the 288 board feet of lumber from Bayanga town in Davao Oriental to Mandaue City.

Meanwhile, the Penro and Cenro officials had been working overtime in preparing the report on the confiscated lots in time for the secretary's arrival only to be told that they were ordered suspended.

"That's our prize for doing good," said Cebu Penro officer Richard Abella after Defensor announced their preventive suspension.

Defensor told a news conference that he believed that there was connivance among the personnel to make it appear that the shipments of logs was legal.

Asuncion told the Inquirer that two ranking officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Southern Mindanao and another Police official were among those personally suspended but Defensor did not mention their names during the news conference yesterday.

Among the environment personnel in Cebu who were suspended were Penro Cebu officer Richard Abella, Penro-listed specialists Aldrich Ranola, Tanya officer Nolmedo Cabreza, Cenro listed specialist Rodrigo Cenizal, Cenro chief (officer-in-charge) Nelita Lopino, Cenro forest protection section chief Raul Sasak, Cenro chief (officer-in-charge) Nelita Lopino, Cenro forest protection section chief Raul Sasak, Cenro chief (officer-in-charge) Eulalio Cala and senior Mariano Hospido.

Four forest rangers in Davao Cebu were also suspended. They were Leonardo de los Reyes, Felipe Labajo, Allan Dennis and Domingo Servillon.

The nine suspended from Davao Oriental were Cenro chief Jose Julius Velder, aides Dante Rivera, foresters Emmanuel Serraya and Eusebio Rosa, and the forest rangers Nilo Rodriguez, Nandito Macaso, Jaime Espinosa, Medardo Pedro and Rolando Natalio.

DENR warns steel plant of closure for pollution

IMUS, Cavite—The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has warned Iron and Steel Industries Inc. (ISSI) of possible suspension or cancellation of its environmental compliance certificate (ECC) for serious violations of environmental protection laws arising from its operation.

ISSI is a steel processing and manufacturing plant in Barangay Hugo Perez in Trece Martires town, Cavite.

Luciano Horcilla, DENR acting director in the Calabarzon region, said ISSI had continuously ignored an order stipulated in its ECC to put up an Environmental Monitoring Fund and create a Multi-Partite Monitoring Team to monitor air, noise and wastewater emissions of its plant.

The warning called up the Office of the Mayor of Trece Martires and the local police office to get the phone number of ISSI for its side but the two local officials claimed that the company was not listed in their directories.

ISSI's ECC was granted on June 6, 1997. Without an ECC, a firm cannot continue to operate.

DENR's steering center after a visit of a multi-sectoral fact-finding team to ISSI's plant in Barangay Hugo Perez in Trece Martires town, Cavite last Jan. 5.

The investigation stemmed from a report of the environmental group Earth Savers Movement after local residents complained of health hazards posed by ISSI's factory.

The report was submitted to the calls by DENR-provincial officer Jaclelina Ibabao, environmental impact evaluation chief Sonia Danjug and pollution control division officer in charge Jesus Conde.

The investigating team reported that ISSI had not installed a wastewater treatment facility to address environment pollution problems resulting from its operations.

"Wastewater generated by the first to being stored in a container tank in the steam line then the firm is in the process of constructing its wastewater treatment facility" for team's report said.

The plant, which manufactures galvanized iron sheets, reportedly emits over 15 gallons of wastewater containing alkali and acid solutions which are considered toxic and hazardous as these substances cause infections and skin irritations.

It was still unclear how Inspectors tried to ascertain after the storage tank has been filled up.

Alcelan Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Brunei exec in Mindanao

COTABATO CITY—Brunei Darussalam's defense minister arrived here yesterday to visit his country's peacekeeping troops in Mindanao.

Brunei Darussalam Defense Minister Yang Berhormat Yang Bendahara Pehin Datu Singamanteri arrived with Brunei defense permanent secretary Dato Paduka Haji Mohamad Yassin bin Haji Umar at the Cotabato airport on board a Brunei jetliner.

Brunei has sent a 10-man peacekeeping force as part of the International Monitoring Team that monitors the implementation of the government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front ceasefire agreement.

Last November, Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Dato Sri Mhad Najib bin tun Haji Mohammad Abdul Razak visited the 50-man Malaysian peacekeeper here.

Ed Kabalo, speaking for the MILF, said the visit was a clear manifestation of Brunei's concern on the peace process. The visit came as both sides prepare for the resumption of formal peace negotiations next month in Kuala Lumpur. Edwin G. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau

C. De Oro City Hall up for sale for P800M

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—The city's mayor has come under fire for a plan to sell the historical site and building of the city hall for P800 million.

The plan to sell the city hall has created uproar from various groups, who vowed to stop it. The Manor Heritage Foundation stated that the Capitol de Oro Historical Site was declared a heritage site by the National Historical Institute (NHI) in 1998.

Mayor Vicente Emano is said to have approved the sale of the city hall to the Emano family, who owns the Limketkai Center, a shopping mall and residential complex.

The city hall is in front of the Cathedral's Church and is said to be the oldest building in the city.

Emano wants to sell the city government property to finance the construction of a new city hall complex on a 17 hectare property in Upper Cugong in Barangay Carmen

CHR sets separate probe of cop's shooting rampage

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—The Commission on Human Rights in Negros Occidental will conduct an independent investigation of the murderous rampage by a policeman in Kalibo, Aklan during the Ati-atihan Festival last Jan. 16.

Romeo Baldevarona, CHR-Negros acting chief, said his office was acting on the request of the family of PO1 Jonathan Morefio.

"The CHR will investigate the killing of Morefio and the other victims to determine if any human rights violations were committed before, during and after the incident," he said.

Morefio went on a shooting rampage at the height of the Ati-atihan Festival and killed six persons, including his boss Supt. Odelardo Magaytes, acting Aklan police director, and Chief Insp. Manuel Ilejay Jr., Kalibo police chief.

At least 30 persons were wounded, most of them bystanders and merrymakers, before Morefio was gunned down by his fellow policemen.

The police were conducting an investigation to determine what drove Morefio to go berserk. Among the angles being looked into was that Morefio cracked due to pressure exerted by fellow officers working for an alleged drug lord.

But his widow, Ma. Hitzhel, and mother, Ninfa, went to the CHR office here on Wednesday to ask the office to conduct an independent investigation.

"We want an independent investigating body to tell us what really happened," Ma. Hitzhel Morefio told the INQUIRER.

She said they also asked the CHR to help facilitate an independent autopsy of her husband's body after the National Bureau of Investigation told them that a court order was needed for the agency to conduct another autopsy.

Hitzhel was concerned that her husband's uniform bore many bullet holes in the back and in the buttocks when the Aklan municipal office report showed that he died of gunshot wounds in the left and right sides of the abdomen.

She said the bullet holes on the uniform seemed to indicate that the person or persons who shot Morefio intended to finish him off.

Arnel Sigue, NBI Bacolod special agent, said police have already conducted an autopsy of Morefio's body.

To conduct another autopsy, he added, would already require a court order. "The NBI Bacolod is requesting a copy of the autopsy report from the Philippine National Police," he said.

Faith healers feel left out

BAGUIO CITY—Felt left out from the government's medical tourism program, the faith healers of Baguio said they could bring foreign tourists by themselves.

"For three straight years in the 1970s, we were the No. 1 dollar earners for the region," said Martin Caolli, vice president of the Baguio Healers Association.

"When the city was having this problem with meningococcemia, we were the ones who persuaded our patients to visit us here in Baguio," said Caolli.

BHA members said they felt slighted when Purificacion Molintas, Cordillera director of the Department of Tourism, said they should be registered to be included in the DOT's medical tourism program.

Former Tourism Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan conceived the program to showcase "cost-effective medical treatments combined with special itineraries that would highlight some of the best tourist attractions the country has to offer."

The program is for foreign tourists "willing to undergo minimally invasive medical procedures and treatments."

Among the medical institutions included were St. Luke's Medical Hospital, Capitol Medical Center and Medical City, all in Metro Manila.

For Cordillera, Molintas mentioned spa resorts and the traditional Bontoc massage.

"For faith healers, they have to be registered first," she said.

"How can you register healing? Healing is God-given and not taught in schools," Caolli said.

"Healing is divine. Magnetic healing is unexplainable but effective," said Placido Palitayan, vice president of the Philippine Healers Circle.

He said during the time of the late Tourism Secretary Jose Aspiras in the 1970s, faith healing in Baguio was encouraged.

"The Philippine Airlines even coordinated my schedule so that the foreign tour groups would know where I was," said Palitayan.

He said he used to have 100 patients a day. He said for one year in the 1970s, he had 17,000 patients from Australia alone. ***Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau***

Quezon town fire kills 3, hurts 1

LUCENA CITY—Three persons died and at least 50 commercial and residential buildings were razed in a three-hour fire in the coastal town of Calauag, Quezon early Thursday morning.

Supt. Leandro Lindain, Calauag municipal police office chief, identified the victims as Renalyn Mabulayan, 23; Ancheta Avendano, 27; and Aida Castro, 50—all helpers in Farmacia Limcuando in Barangay III at the town proper.

Lindain said the victims were trapped on the second floor of the two-story drugstore and residential building.

Police said the fire started at around 2:30 a.m.

It spread to four blocks in Barangay III and IV and burned several houses made of light materials.

The owner, a certain Dr. Cely Limcuando, also suffered injuries when she jumped from the terrace.

She suffered several fractured bones and injuries in different parts of the body.

Lindain said they could not yet determine the cause of the fire since the owner of the drugstore was still in a state of shock.

Henry Buzar, official of the Provincial Disaster and Coordinating Council who immediately rushed to Calauag, said lack of water helped spread the fire.

He said the town has no fire hydrants and the firemen only relied on seawater.

"But since it was low tide, getting water from the sea made it doubly difficult," he said in a phone interview.

Buzar said the town residents helped put the fire out by fetching water from their deep well pumps.

The PDCC estimated the damage at around P40 million. ***Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau***

Joker digs in to block VAT

(continued on page B1)

the VAT bill on Monday. The Senate is expected to send floor debates on the measure before the chamber starts its Easter break on March 28.

"We will be working double-time. The senators are aware of the need to enact these revenue measures," said Drilon, principal author of Senate Bills 1830 and 1873 seeking to lift VAT exemptions and increase the rate from 10 to 12 percent.

But Arroyo said: "I am against it. I've already taken a position and I won't back out." He pointed out that even the American Chamber of Commerce had said that a 12-percent VAT on goods and services would be "very onerous to the poor."

Nut Palace dummies

He also said that although the House passed the Value-Added Tax Restructuring Act (HR 3), "it's not yet final" and "we're still before short recesses, senators allied with the administration were no dummies of Malacañang.

"We also decide for ourselves," said Arroyo, vice chair of the Senate committee on ways and means committee. "Why are we so afraid that if we enforce the SEC against the oil companies, the latter would pass on the cost [to consumers]? If we enforce the VAT on independent power producers, they'll pass it on to consumers. It is as if we said anything anymore because we are scared of someone. We don't have freedom anymore. These are the things that we should assert to ourself."

The militant Bagong Alyansang Makabayan announced that the campaign against the VAT measure would now spill over the streets in the form of protest actions.

"The anti-VAT lawmakers were vastly outnumbered in the House. But we know that outside Congress, the numbers are in favor of them," said Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes Jr. "That is why we have to take this fight to the parliament of the streets."

Pro-poor amendments

The principal author of the controversial bill is not satisfied with how it turned out.

"I am quite disappointed. The amendments with which we had intended to spare our poor people were not able to make it in the SEC and Rep. Eric Singson (LP, Ilocos Sur), senior vice chair of the House ways and means committee.

Singson would have wanted an exemption for such items as milk, cooking oil, canned sardines and other food popular among the poor.

But he did not say that the bill had been railroaded by the administration chieftains of the chamber, and ignored blasted the opposition for the House's failure to enact the pro-poor amendments.

Legal quandary

Singson said the walkout Wednesday night by 22 opposition lawmakers put the House leadership in a legal quandary as to whether it should proceed further now the stage of amendments.

He noted the constitutional provision saying that for a vote on emergency to be approved, the measure measure must get the majority vote of the House—or 119 out of 226.

"There was some confusion as to the number of congressmen on the floor because some of our colleagues were actually in and out of the session hall. If the amendment did not get 119 votes, it would be doomed," he said.

Singson said it was only later, when 148 votes were cast in the third and final reading, that it was determined that 126 congressmen had voted for it, against 11 dissenters.

'On a roll'

In Malacañang, President Bhimpapal Arroyo congratulated the House "for taking the lead in putting our fiscal house in order."

"This is an act of valiant statesmen that builds a better future to all Filipinos by growing the economy to create more jobs and push our 10-point pro-poor program," she said in a statement.

Ms Arroyo said the strong partnership between the executive and legislative branches of government was being "reinforced by a new economic team that will continue our policies and programs for the benefit of the average Filipino."

"The economy is on a roll and we shall continue to ensure that the most marginal sectors are shielded from short-term adversities by cushioning pains where the most telling social impact is expected," she said.

People will not bear burden

In an interview over dzMM, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunyi said those opposed to the VAT measure were "using the opportunity that our senators will have all October" to the increase.

"No," he said, and insisted that the burden would be borne by those who had the means. "For instance, our middle and upper classes...those who often go to some restaurants and hotels and have our fares—of course they will have to bear the burden for that style of consumption.

"But our people, for example, those who are [only] allowed to eat in jueteng lords' [illegible] mansions and salipapas, the VAT [increase] will not affect them."

Bunyi maintained this position even if the House voted down the proposal to exempt canned goods, bread and noodles from the VAT increase, from which the government hopes to raise P50 billion. *Reports from Michael Lim Ubac, Gerilyn Pabilo, Cynthia D. Balana, Christine D. Avendaño, Artur Lalog-Javellana and Norman Bordadora*

Impact of VAT increase

Commodity	Price inclusive of 10% VAT	Price inclusive of 12% VAT	Price increase (in Pesos)
Sardines (small can)	13.30	13.49	0.19
Powdered Milk (400g)	268.10	264.66	4.56
Liquid Milk (370 ml)	27.35	27.75	0.40
Refined Sugar (1 kilo)	29.80	29.32	0.52
Brown Sugar (1 kilo)	23.76	24.18	0.43
Noodles (small pack)	5.35	5.30	0.19
Corned Beef (small)	44.86	45.47	0.62
Cooking Oil (350 ml)	19.80	19.36	0.26
Project Card w/o discount	300	300.86	0.86
Project Card w/ discount	290	290.27	0.27

SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

Noodles go up to P5.35, and other 'slight' hikes

(continued on page B1)

Among those branches, she said, were bigger public funds for classrooms and textbooks and immunization programs. To the new low dues we will have to the data showing he gains," she said.

Soliman formulated the increases a price control of basic goods using the consumer price index (CPI) computations were done by the Department of Finance.

In the months the cost of powdered milk (400g) will rise from P259.10 under the 10-percent VAT scheme to P264.66; liquid milk (370ml), from P27.25 to P27.75; refined sugar (1 kilo), from P29.80 to P30.32; brown sugar (1 kilo), from P23.75 to P24.18, and canned beef (small can), P44.85 to P45.47.

The militant Takdolnik alliance Pamalakaya said a 12-percent VAT on the costs of transporting fish from the ports to the market and the ice used to keep stocks fresh would result in a P15-P20 increase in the prices of galunggong, the poor man's fish.

Galunggong

"If it is enacted into law, this cheapest piece of legislation will finally take away galunggong from the dining table of poor Filipinos," Pamalakaya national chairperson Fernando Hicap said.

According to Hicap, President Macapagal-Arroyo promised two years ago to lower the price of galunggong.

"At that time, the price of galunggong was between P60 and P80 a kilo. Now the price stands at an average P100," he said.

Hicap pointed out that prior to the enthusiasm of the 10-percent VAT law during the Ramos administration, galunggong was only a little over P20 a kilo. He said the same applied to other fish products sold in markets nationwide.

But he clarified that the sharp increase in the prices of fish products was determined by monopolies and trading cartels. He said this would not benefit small fishermen whose harvests were undeclared.

P86.73 more

The research staff of Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro Casiño said their own analysis and computations on the impact of the proposed VAT hike showed that poor families would have to shell out an additional P86.73 a month, as opposed to the 1859 projection of P95.22 a month.

The party-list group defines the poor as those earning P6,550 a month, or P90,000 a year, whereas the DOF indicates in the poor never only those earning less than the minimum P5,000 a month, or P60,000 a year.

According to Bayan Muna, P8,333 (monthly translates to P100 daily.

While the minimum wage in Metro Manila is pegged at P300, the decent cost of living has been placed at P800 a day it said.

GMA 'classmate' wants old customs job back

(continued on page B1)

his amounting P62 million is alleged ill-gotten wealth and for failing the lifestyle check is fighting tooth and nail to regain her post at the Port of San Fernando, La Union.

The efforts of Alberto Iglesias to reclaim the old post have apparently as upset part personnel that they were able to collect only a fraction of about P68 million in targeted revenues this month.

Records at the Bureau of Customs (BOC) Intelligence Investigation and Enforcement Service (IIIS) filed the case against Iglesias.

They said she had amassed "an amount of property and/or money manifestly out of proportion to her salary and to her lawful income."

With a monthly salary of P32,000, Iglesias had declared gross assets of P92 million and a net worth of P68 million.

The IIIS lawyers found that she had not submitted a Statement of Assets and Liabilities since 1999 and only started doing so when she was appointed to the Bureau of Customs in 2000.

They said she had also failed to declare two pieces of property and declared three real estate assets as inheritance when she actually bought them, as proved by the deeds of sale.

Iglesias had described the graft charge as "unfair," saying she was "not even extravagant."

Nevertheless, she was suspended for violating provisions of the Code of Conduct for Public Officials and Employees, the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, the Law on Forfeiture and Unlawfully Acquired Property and the Revised Penal Code.

Cease and desist order

But after serving her suspension, Iglesias issued notices to Customs Commissioner Dunge Jimen, promoted and other officers that she had assigned her functions as acting district collector of the San Fernando port, reliefees Tan said in his own letter to Mendoza.

In the Jan. 26 letter, a copy of which the Inquirer obtained from sources at the Ombudsman, Tan said Iglesias continued to exercise authority as port district collector after the OMB and Jimen had issued a "cease and desist" order against her.

Tan said Iglesias' "unlawful conduct" had "seriously hampered the operations of the port and greatly disgruntled customs personnel due to the continuing confusion and increasing unrest."

He said the infighting had "chaotic and adverse effects on the collection efforts of the port, to the extent that it was able to collect only P21 million from Jan. 1 to 15 out of the monthly target of more than P68 million."

Tan said the "early resolution" of the case against Iglesias would "restore order" at the port and would be "in the best interest of the service."

'Classmate'

Reached by phone yesterday afternoon, Tan told the Inquirer that Iglesias had managed to get some port employees to lure side by claiming that her family was close to Ms Arroyo, her father supposedly having been a member of the Late President Ferdinando Marcos's Cabinet.

"She tells us, as well as officials at the DBCC and the Ombudsman, that she was a classmate of the President at the Assumption College in Makati," Tan said.

Inquirer sources at the Ombudsman also said Iglesias was "open" about her supposed closeness to the President.

Name-dropping

But Tan said a check with people close to both Ms Arroyo and Iglesias showed that the two were "schoolmates, at best."

"If they were close, the Ombudsman would not have suspended [Iglesias]," Tan said, adding that the latter had clearly been dropping the President's name.

In the graft complaint, Arroyo and Pisanes said Iglesias was using Ms Arroyo's name to smear up the promotion ladder.

They said she had a master's degree in business administration but told the President that it was a master's degree in matrimony administration.

"Sadly it was failing to file the required SALN and falsifying entries therein, DBM made false representations about her education in letters to (the President), seeking promotion as collector of [the airport] customs house or deputy collector for passenger services, or collector of the port of Subic," they said.

Why power rates are high, and will go higher

Transcript of

provisionally approved by the Energy Regulatory Commission last September. But the rate at which the NPC can recover all its costs and earn the legally allowed 8-percent profit in the Visayas grid is P4.298 per kWh. The Visayas rate, in other words, is a third below its "market" price.

Disputing gov't arithmetic

But militant groups and consumer lawyers' group Ibon point out only the government's antiquated, they also scorn the principle behind the government's approach to the electric power industry.

"We don't need another rate increase because, first, prices are already high and the public can not afford to pay higher rates. Second, the rate increase proposed by Napocor and implemented by Meralco and the ERC is only because they want to sell more power," Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr., chair of the consumer and consumer group Ibon.

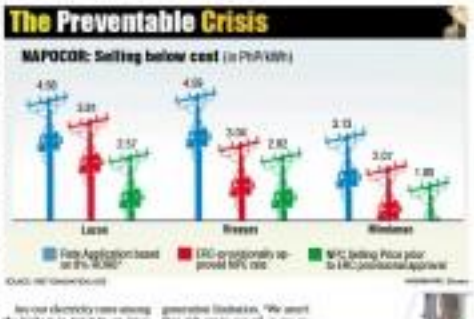
"The issue here is, 'Who should put up power generation, power transmission, and distribution in the country?' Tupang said, is an IMF-WB interview conducted solely in Filipino. The principle of privatizing the power sector was plain wrong, he said.

"The government wants to privatize everything, because in their view, this is the way the industry needs. But in our view, what the Filipino people need is to nationalize the power industry and not to sell it, because the only result will be seven-ending rate increases," Tupang said.

Bulatao's broken down the government's assumption about the long-term benefits of privatization. "So once the dust settles you can see that the rates will go up, but over the medium term and the long term, once you have a successful privatization, you can see that the rates will come down," Bulatao Lopez, president of First Generation Holdings Corp., said at a briefing for business editors. His presentation can be viewed at www.mig2.com/.

Asian benchmark?

Not so, Tupang said. "This idea of privatization as the answer to everything, this still not ended in lower rates. In fact, what will happen is rates will go up and continue to go up."



SOURCE: NPC CONSOLIDATED FS

Any cost electricity rates among the highest in Asia? To an interview the weekend before he announced his resignation, Energy Secretary Vince Perez at first gave a qualified answer: "We are not the most expensive, we are not the third most expensive; we are in the middle," he said.

Then he gave a categorical one: "Of course, it's still expensive. Whatever we say, our electricity does not come cheap."

Why are rates high in the first place?

2 major reasons

Perez, whose resignation takes effect after March, offered two major reasons.

The first is a transmission problem.

"Electricity from a plant in Pangasinan cannot be used by a consumer in Mindanao," Perez said. He also noted that hydroelectric power in Mindanao could not be used by consumers in the Visayas. "They will not be able to enjoy cheaper electricity."

It takes a major investment in time and money to connect the Luzon grid, which in fact has an oversupply of power, to those in the Visayas and Mindanao. "Our country is an archipelago. We have 7,000 islands," Perez said, lamenting the obvious that is all too often overlooked. (But why is there an oversupply in Luzon? Because most of the independent power producers or IPPs constructed during the last power crisis set up shop in Luzon.)

The second reason, he said, is a generation limitation. "We aren't [but rich yet to use oil or gas resources."

Resource-rich neighbors

In contrast, our nearest neighbors have considerable resources. Indonesia overuses oil to such locally. Malaysia (40 percent hydropower sources) and Thailand (29 percent) are both largely energy-independent too. Import dependencies, however, is not the major factor that drives rates. Taiwan and South Korea, for instance, import almost all their oil requirements. But a substantial portion of their electricity is generated by nuclear power plants.

All five countries have inched at rates lower than those in the Philippines. In the case of Thailand, Perez said, rates, the rates are lower by almost half.

Building frenzy

But other factors have driven our rates up. Let us highlight only two reasons.

To a position paper posted—with a disclaimer—on the home page of the Napocor website (www.napocor.gov.ph), whose president of the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (Psalm) listed several other factors, led to Napocor's financial implosion.

The first, Edgardo del Rosario wrote, is "a frenzied build-up in generation capacity...mostly through [take-or-take] Build-Operate-Transfer contracts with IPPs. It was a program whose summon was carried it past signs of emerging overcapacity."

The public is paying for that overcapacity. The IPP contracts bound the government to pay for the capacity built, not the actual use of it. Lopez, whose family owns a pro-IPPs as well as Manila Electric Co., the country's largest distribution utility, cited the analogy of a car loan to explain the difference. During the loan period, he said, the borrower pays the same interest on the car, regardless of whether the car was used for long-distance travel or stayed in the garage.

Optimistic demand forecasts

Lastly, del Rosario's successor in Psalm president Emmanuel Lopez way was built based on optimistic demand forecasts. "In 1990, all the projections about increases in the demand for electric power also went wrong because they were all projected to grow at a certain rate with growth in the economy, but unfortunately that did not come."

The Philippine Development Plan of 1990, del Rosario wrote, forecast demand "to reach 8,371 kMW by 1998, the actual [demand] was 6,046 MW, or a drop of 19 percent." The imbalance has continued. Lopez, for instance, pegged a Meralco forecast based on 1994 growth projections by the National Economic and Development Authority showing that supply outstripped demand in 2000 by 1,388 MW.

Rates are high in part because the public just can't continue paying for this unused capacity.

Panicked by loans

The building frenzy was fueled in part by the government's determination to prevent the return of Ferdinand Marcos and large, it was feared by loans. Now, Napocor's debt burden is one reason why new capacity is favored: any outages is difficult to contract.

"We have more than P1 trillion in Napocor assets," Perez said. "But over the last 18 years, the government gave Napocor only P27 billion in capital. The difference was paid for by borrowings to build plants, infrastructure, transmission lines, hydroelectric dams. All of that, paid for by borrowings."

But Tupang would not have any of that.

"They say the government has no money, but we can see that in fact the government has a lot of money. But they spend it in ways we never abroad. Why not use that to set up power plants instead? Our foreign debt is so big, and we pay it every year. Why not use this money first to pay down before we pay interest? Excellent, power transmission lines here in the Philippines, so we don't have to face a power crisis?"

Consumers' reaction

"If they push through with the higher rates that Napocor proposed and the other reformers that the ERC wants to implement, to pass all the costs of electricity to consumers, it this is what will happen, we will expect that consumer not to take this sitting down," Tupang warned.

How PNP officer's family lives without electricity in the city

Transcript of

whose head is a middle-ranking police official sleeps through the night without the comfort of an air-con, or at the very least, an electric fan.

Even most of the years in any apartment area have cable TV, providing them with a steady stream of movies and 24-hour news from leading networks in the world.

The family, in stark contrast, listens to a radio powered by batteries. But they have a telephone line.

"It's like living in the previous. But of course, we are in the middle of a city," says Gina.

Natural light, breeze

Inside the old wooden house, a light switch has long been abandoned by its incandescent bulb. It has gathered soot, like the corners of the ceiling.

Yet the house, because of its design and position, is well-lighted. The house has large windows on the front and back, allowing the breeze to enter easily at any time of the day once they are opened. Windows on the ground floor also let the breeze in from the left side of the house.

My husband is a senior superintendent in the Philippine National Police, but we don't have electricity," she points out the irony with a hearty laugh. He works in Mindanao.

"[But] we still survive... If you live like this, you'll learn to enjoy living like this," she says. Nevertheless, that will be difficult. You will look for things that you don't have," she tells the interview.

The house is in a working-class district. As long as the rice is up, there is enough sardines for everybody. (Cans reach Filipino pocket-friendly.)

In the kitchen, her mother is boiling water, using firewood. That is how, at times, the family heats up water for bathing—by burning wood the old-fashioned way.

IT CAN be done: To live in a house with no electricity.

Good ventilation

But the house's ventilation is no good than Gina says even the summers are not that hot.

Gina and her family came to rent the house more than 20 years ago. The rent then was P600 a month. It is now P2,400.

Today, her 66-year-old mother-in-law, her 22-year-old son Mario and 23-year-old daughter Irene are not hesitate who have dried away from modernity. Neither are they taking energy conservation to the extreme.

Their situation was forced upon them three years ago, when a relative, who once lived in the house, installed a "jumper" to keep the electric bills low because he was using an air-con.

It went on for around six months. The last bill, according to Gina, amounted to around P4,000. When they could not pay it, the Manila Electric Co. cut the service. Meralco later inspected the house, and discovered the "jumper."

Meralco charging P180,000

"I don't know how they calculated it—I know the "jumper" went on for around six months—but we ended up owing Meralco around P180,000," Gina says.

Gina promptly applied for an electric line. This time, she wanted the bill under her name. She was told that she had to pay the amount, only then could she electric line be restored.

"It is (true) like this. I'll have to pay P180,000 initially and the rest on a staggered basis, plus the monthly bill (assuming the line is restored). But it was still too heavy so could not raise the amount," she says. She insists she knows nothing about the illegal set-and-therefore, feels she does not owe the electric company that much.

It has been three years since the family gave away to its eldest daughter (who now lives in Dubai) and the refrigerator, washing machine and other electrical appliances in the house.

Petromax

Now the family uses a kerosene lantern and a few small lamps at night. From afar, the lights seems powered by electricity. Only upon closer scrutiny does it become apparent that a kerosene, a kerosene pressure lantern, lights up the house.

But the lantern deposits soot in the corners of the ceiling. "The ceiling has to be cleaned once in a while. It gets so black—I hate it," Gina says.

To avoid the possibility of fire, the family puts out the lamps before retiring to bed. Should they wake and need something, they use a flashlight.

The family spends around P700 a month for kerosene. They use LPG, like most residents of metro Manila, to cook food.

They have also long solved the problem of how to have cold drinking water during meals. "We simply put ice cubes in our glasses," Gina says, chuckling.

She also goes to market every day. While the rooms were cooled food for more than a day, the lack of a refrigerator means that her children's meals are fresh—another benefit of an electric-less house.

Wash and wear

Their clothes have also not felt the key pinch of an iron for some time. "We just hang them to dry. They're ready to wear," Gina says.

Gina says that a person's character is not defined by electricity and the conveniences it provides. "I say more laughable, but Filipinos say her children have accepted their situation without so much as a grumble. It is her 23-year-old son, in fact, who wants to stay in Ilocos.

"Hmmm," Gina quotes her son as telling her once when she asked him if he wanted to leave the place, "we have a house to stay in. Many others don't. Can we ask for more?"

The son works in a printing company. Apparently, he has not acquired electronic gadgets, save a mobile phone. There are no DVD players or play stations in his room. He charges the phone's batteries in his uncle's house nearby, or at his office.

Social life

The daughter's social life has not been hampered by the lack of electricity. She studies management in college in the city.

Gina narrates how at one time, her daughter brought friends to visit. "They lighted a lamp, and they went fine," she says.

Of course, the 54-year-old mother does not fault her longing for electricity. If she can afford it—and her family clearly can pay the monthly bills—why not have it?

Gina goes to her brother's house nearby to watch TV at night.

Alternative lifestyle

She drops these more of the time. But her mother stays at home—she hates electricity.

There is no doubt that this family misses many things that families with electricity usually take for granted. Imagine the consternation of the children when the lights go and off, of running the iron box to press a shirt, of heating food with a microwave oven, of having a cold drink without having to wait for ice cubes.

Yet this family has been into an electricity lifestyle for years—and they have shown it can be done. If Metro Manila can overcome half of what this family goes through every day, imagine how much could be saved in terms of energy and money.

Clean water

But what the family can't do without is clean water, according to Gina. Her fear is another story.

"Water is life. It is also a choice. It is really all up to the people ... If you are contented with this kind of life), it's fine. It's cool," she says.

'Torrid' month in QC

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE NORTH have been getting colder.

But that has been a hot month in Quezon City, where at least 17 fires have broken out early this year.

Based on the latest figures from the Quezon City Fire District, 27 fires did not happen from Jan. 1 to 29.

Almost half of those were big fires, any fire investigation chief (in Quezon) told the Inquirer.

In the last five days alone, at least seven fires were reported in the city, including the blaze which razed more than 100 houses in Barangay Ramon Magsaysay near the SM North mall two days ago.

The latest incident was the fire which razed dozens of units in Quezon Avenue the other night.

Radio officer SPO2 Jaime Vicencio said the fire, which hit Club Verbos in Barangay Sta. Cruz, started at 6:55 p.m. Wednesday.

He reported that it was controlled after the blaze out. Only the roof and a security guard were inside the three-story building, SPO2 Virgilio Aguirre said.

Firefighters put out the fire almost 4 p.m. Thursday, was injured.

Although Fire Prevention Month is still several weeks away, Guerrero said residents should start taking precautions. Most of the fires reported this year have turned to have been caused by faulty electricity wires, he added.

"We should be careful with our electric connections. Owners of old buildings should also start to have their electric connections re-examined," Guerrero said.

The project, which involves the upgrade of the Mindanao Avenue-Alabang Viaduct is expected to be completed within a year.

The construction firms have joined the bidding process.

Ramos said the PNCC bids and awards committee was still evaluating the submitted bids. A decision should be finalized within the next few weeks.

While still evaluating the bids, Ramos said preparations were already underway on how to prevent massive traffic jams once construction on the project starts.

"The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority through Chief Bayani Fernando, had said it would deploy people to ease the traffic situation in the area once construction starts," he said.

Ramos added that the viaduct would remain partially open, and the northbound lane passable. The road below the viaduct would also be open to Class 3 vehicles like big trucks.

Cars, vans and small trucks, (Class 2 and Class 1), on the other hand, can use the Filinvest Spectrum Highway.

The Alabang Viaduct rehabilitation project is only one component of the three-phase upgrade of the South Luzon Expressway.

The two other components are the 11-km Alabang-Calamba expansion and rehabilitation project and the 8.2-km Calamba-Sto. Tomas extension plan.

Like the Alabang Viaduct project, the contract for the PHP1.7-billion Calamba-Sto. Tomas venture has yet to be awarded to a bidder.

"But we're nearing that stage," said Noel III Rimando, chair of the Department of Trade and Industry-Board of Investments.

"Rights of way acquisitions are already ongoing, in cooperation with the Toll Regulatory Board, the Department of Public Works and Highways, the PNCC and the National Development Corp.," he said.

Rimando added that the DTI continues to be active in pushing for the three-stage Slex upgrade as this would facilitate the faster delivery of goods in the airports and seaports.

The upgrade would complement commercial activities at the Calabarzon (Cavite-Laguna-Batangas-Rizal-Quezon) area, he said.

Alabang Viaduct rehab underway

By Abigail L. Ho

HEIN while nearing the the awarding of the construction contract to the winning bidder, the Philippine National Construction Corp. has already started preliminary work on the P776-million Alabang Viaduct rehabilitation project.

PNCC chair and chief executive Hector Ramos Jr. said the first bad stretch of road up-to-specifications work on the area. Right of way acquisitions had likewise started, although the contract is yet to be awarded to a bidder.

Frustrated murder, theft raps filed vs PDEA agents

By Lelia B. Salaverria

THE DEPARTMENT of Justice has filed frustrated murder and theft charges against two members of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency who were accused of shooting a National Bureau of Investigation agent in Marikina City in 2003.

At the same time, the DOJ also dismissed another case originally filed against Sr. Supt. Orlando Mahilum, director of the agency's Metro Manila Regional Office, for lack of sufficient evidence.

Facing charges for shooting Special Investigator Marvin Marcelo and taking his personal belongings are PO2 Herman Jr. and Pfc. Sherwin Bulan, members of the PDEA Special Enforcement Service.

Shot

Marcelo, of the NBI's intelligence Special Operations Division, was shot on the chest, thigh, foot and legs on Nov. 5 at the corner of Marcelino Highway and Sumulong Street in Marikina City.

Bulan and Platon had approached him as he was asking for help from a traffic enforcer in settling a dispute with an FX driver, Marcelo said. The two PDEA members, who were not in white Toyota Revo, allegedly thought the traffic enforcer was extorting money from Marcelo, but the latter clarified the matter and introduced himself as an NBI agent.

The PDEA agents, however, were not satisfied and refused to have been drinking, apparently got irked and tried to force Marcelo into their vehicle, but he refused. This prompted the two PDEA members to assault him.

Later, another man whom Marcelo subsequently identified from pictures as Malunsa, approached the group. The man allegedly asked the NBI agent if he knew the latter's son and Marcelo said yes. The man then allegedly ordered the two PDEA members to arrest Marcelo.

Marcelo was shot as he struggled to get away from the PDEA agents. He added that they also took his badge, wallet with P15,000 in cash, his .38 firearm and other personal items.

Marcelo said he was later brought to the Batasang Pambansa Hospital for treatment and later transferred to another hospital. He was confined for around a month, he added.

In their defense, Platon and Bulan said they were defending themselves from the NBI agent. Platon reported that he had an argument with Marcelo over parking space in front of a bar food outlet.

Struggle

Bulan said that as he was about to approach Marcelo at the parking lot, the latter pulled out a gun. The two men then grappled for the gun it subsequently went off. Bulan then pulled out his gun and fired one shot during a struggle with Marcelo.

Platon said he was inside the bar food outlet when he heard the shots and went outside to help Bulan. It was then that he shot Marcelo.

Malunsa, on the other hand, denied that he was in the area when the incident took place, adding that he does not even know Bulan and Platon.

In his resolution, DOJ prosecutor Manuel Lachgar Bulan said Malunsa's arguments involving self-defense were not convincing, especially since Marcelo' statement has been corroborated by several witnesses.

"The motive of bad, no injury, either slight or serious, was sustained by the respondents. In contrast, the number and nature of the wounds sustained by the complainant are indeed that respondents did not act in self defense," the resolution read.

Lachgar also noted that two witnesses had testified that the two PDEA agents smelled of liquor at the time of the incident.

The state prosecutor said the witnesses' descriptions of Malunsa did not match his actual appearance. Lachgar also said there was no evidence showing Malunsa had shot Marcelo.

Geography, history lessons for cops

LOST in Manila or looking for a historical landmark?

Try asking a policeman for help.

Soon, all policemen in Manila will be familiar with the city's geographies and history after they go through a mandatory course on these subjects at the Western District Training Center, also known as the Manila Police Academy.

The academy was formally opened on Jan. 8 this year, the eve of the WPD's 104th anniversary.

Chief Insp. Alejandro Tangalin, the center's acting dean, said that he would require all WPD patrolmen, including officials, to undergo at least a week of refresher courses on Manila's history and geography and the city government's programs and ordinances.

"Manila policemen should be familiar with the city's background and its streets, especially when people ask them for help," said Tangalin, who also heads the WPD's Task Force Safeguard.

He said that familiarity with the city and its ordinances would help law enforcers respond to crime or emergency incidents immediately as they can do their jobs more efficiently.

The courses are also open to non-WPD members.

The training center also offers barbecue and manicure programs, in coordination with the city government's Barangay Ng Maynila.

Courses on specialized skills like bomb disposal and the handling of situations like hostage-taking and bank robberies would also be offered at the center.

WPD director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong earlier said he opened the academy so that the members of the WPD, known as "Manila's Finest," could have access to training and live up to the tag.

Lelia B. Salaverria

MetroBriefs

Taguig loan scheme

CHECK issues for public servants, who had been driven by loan sharks, fraudulent documents and employees of the Taguig City local government unit were arrested Thursday in a sting operation offered by loan sharks through text messages to government employees. The arrested employees will appear in court today for loan-sharking. Arrested were Taguig City Hall employees Rolando Tiglao, 39, and Rosalinda Tiglao, 38. The local government unit had entered into a memorandum of agreement recently, allowing teachers and employees of the city to avail of loans using their monthly allowances as collateral. For the signed the agreement as chair of the local bank, and Bautista as chairman of the board of directors. Bautista was a vice president of Allied Bank, while the latter was also the founder of Loan Bank. "They can now get an advance on your salaries ahead of their monthly allowances through a loan with minimal interest," Teaga said. The teachers and employees, he said, would be asked to issue a waiver over their rights to the monthly allowances of P1,000 processed by them by the local government. They will also be asked to write a letter authorizing the local government to turn over the money to the bank as payment for their loans. Tiglao added. The memorandum of agreement loan program meant to help the teachers and employees was endorsed and approved by the city's Sangguniang Panglungsod in October last year. It also authorized the city executive to enter into an MOA with a financial institution for the implementation of the program.

Rebecca C. Cervantes

UST Hi Grand Night

REMINDED of the fun-ending of the Teresa Education High School Class of '83-'87 will hold their Grand Night tonight at the Shangri-La Hotel in Makati as the culminating activity of their High Memories reunion. For Tia Dies' information about the affair, interested members may contact Perky Abad at 0918-510-0814 or Angie Reyna at 0921-519-0886 for information.

San Juan wins Round 2 in mall battle

By Luige A. del Puerto

THE TOWN of San Juan has taken the lead in the battle of the disputed Agora Mall site following recording in Mayor Joseph Victor Ejercito.

"We are lucky that the Court of Appeals decided in our favor," Ejercito said in a press briefing on Wednesday.

"We were able to get an injunction arming under the decision of the lower court. It means the management and control of the Market! and Agora Mall should be given to the municipality," the mayor added.

The town had assumed control of the mall in January 2003, but Mega Land Resources and Development Corporation had obtained a writ of preliminary injunction from a Manila court.

On Jan. 17, the Court of Appeals issued a temporary restraining order enjoining a Manila court to enforce its earlier decision, town officials said.

The close-in mall, however, has the legal battle is over.

Ejercito said the town had just won the "second round."

As a result of the higher court's decision, town lawyer Bonnadette de los Santos directed the tenants in the area to pay their dues, amounting to around P2 million a month, to San Juan.

"All tenants should immediately stop paying rentals to Mega Land. Henceforth, remit payment to Mega Land will not be recognized," De los Santos said in her directive.

But the money will not be part of the town's annual budget, according to Ejercito.

Once the court decides each & it, only then will manage the mall, the town would give the money to the mall's landlord once again, the mayor said.

In the late 1990s, San Juan entered into a build-operate-transfer contract with Mega Land to construct a five-story shopping mall on Jennings Street right across the town hall.

But its construction encountered delays. To date, the structure remains unfinished.

In a verdict, the Sandiganbayan Supan exonerated Mega Land's memorandum of agreement with the town in October 2003.

In January 2003, the tenants began paying their dues to the town for some time, according to town officials.

Mega Land, however, contended in asking the court to stop the town from taking over the mall's management.

This month, the Court of Appeals ruled in favor of San Juan, Ejercito said.

"There is no further legal obstacle preventing the municipality from collecting rentals from tenants of Agora Mall, and to take over the management and operation of the place," he De Santos said in his directive.

"Tenants who fail to pay their monthly rentals to the municipality will be subject to eviction proceedings in accordance with law," the directive said.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

METRO

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 2004

SUERTRES 1 6 7
SIX DIGIT 6 4 5 4 0 5
EZ2 34 38
SUPERLOTTO 6/49 3 32 39 46 47 P41,612,358.90
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No law vs cybersex, PNP laments

By Christian V. Esguerra

CYBERSEX dens have sprouted in many computer shops throughout Metro Manila, but police appear helpless in the absence of a stricter law to contain the spread.

There is no law against cybersex as longer with manipulated images, Senior Insp. Rodolfo "Boogie" Magsino, officer in charge of the PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group.

Republic Act No. 9208, or the Anti-Trafficking of Persons Act, is "weak," and not enough to punish operators of cybersex shops, the official added.

"The law is weak in the sense that mere possession of pornographic materials is not punishable, even if it's clear that these are used for cybersex," he said.

Citing as an example was an incident in the past when the PNP "had" to raise against Belgian Roland Thys, whose cybersex den in Barangay Malabanias, Angeles City, Pampanga was raided by police on Oct. 4.

The Department of Justice had ruled in a resolution dated May 2, 2004 that mere possession of pornographic card in the digital activity was not enough to obtain the case against the Belgian in court.

Without a clear provision prohibiting cybersex activities, Magsino said authorities would have to resort more often to unpublished violations.

Still, people like Thys are more likely to escape prosecution, he added.

For instance, materials like pictures and messages found in a computer seized during a raid would have to be "circumstantial" to actually prove that someone is being used for trafficking purposes, Magsino explained.

The PNP asserted the above only the proliferation of cybersex dens not only in Metro Manila but in other parts of the country.

Magsino identified the cities of Angeles and San Fernando in Pampanga, Las Piñas and Davao as cybersex "hot spots."

As town was done had been raided in Angeles late last year, the PNP official said.

Last week, police also raided a cybersex shop registered under the name Digerotic Studios at Ingalls Avenue in San Pablo City.

On Monday the National Telecommunications Commission ordered the temporary shutdown of all chat rooms, following complaints that many of these had been used as sex channels.

SPORTS TV

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, 2007

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WHAT'S INSIDE

■ Tigresses roar past Lady Tams /A23

■ Williams survives Sharapova /A24

Not so fast, PBA tells Asi in wake of new court ruling /A22

No Asi 'fastbreak,' says PBA commish

By Jane Navarro

SOT SO's Sat. Air Seekers.

Although given the go-signal by a Quezon City Regional Trial Court prosecutor to reopen the Talk 'N Text Phone Mic in the Philippine Basketball Association, commissioner Noli Eala is in no hurry to take him back.

"We will file a motion for reconsideration tomorrow (today) and until further notice, his (Tenderio) suspension stays," said Eala of the court order throwing the PBA to lift Tenderio's suspension that was based on a Department of Justice ruling that he (slain) his stepmother.

Eala has also called for an emergency meeting with the league's board of governors today to discuss the implications of the order.

"It came as a surprise," said Eala. "They (Tenderio's lawyers) earlier filed a motion on two occasions and they were both denied. They didn't raise any new matter with respect to the case and the court granted Tenderio a favorable decision on the third try."

Judge Rogelio Pizarro of Branch 222 of the Quezon City RTC ordered the PBA to allow Tenderio to resume his exercise of his contractual rights, "including his right to play in the current All-Philippine Conference and succeeding conferences of the PBA" until further orders from the court or unless terminated by a higher court.

The new court order came barely one a week after a Manila court issued an injunction stopping the Department of Justice and the Bureau of Immigration from carrying out summary deportation proceedings against Tenderio.

"We believe in the correctness of our decision 'no suspend line[,]' said Eala, adding the latest court verdict was 'replete with factual errors.'

The PBA suspended Tenderio and five other foreign-born players found to have DQ ruling that they lifted documents to gain Filipino citizenship. This was provided by a Senate investigation into the players' citizenship.

Mick Dennis, Dwayne Hasp and Jon Dykstra had long left the country while Rudy Hadibili and Alex Crisanto are still awaited after filing separate TROs to extend their stay in the country.

Tenderio's counsel, Eduardo E. Francisco, said the court took cognizance of their amended petition because of "supervening events" that took place between the time the court issued down the player's ban earlier petitions for the issuance of a temporary restraining order (TRO) on the PBA's suspension order and the filing of their amended petition.

Francisco said one of the supervening events was the Jan. 6 ruling of a Manila RTC that stopped the DOJ and the SI from stripping Tenderio of his citizenship.

According to Francisco, Tenderio's suspension by the PBA violated his constitutional rights to due process and his contractual rights with Talk 'N Text since the suspension was anchored on a mere DOJ resolution that questioned Tenderio's citizenship.

VERSUS MONTAÑA

Welcoat ousts Magnolia, makes finals

By Jeannine W. Poyo

IT CAME down to two teams not many predicted would meet in the finals.

Fourth seed Welcoat Paints will battle Mercafe for championship in the PBL Open championship series after posting a hard-fought, 87-84 win yesterday over Magnolia Hi-Fi in the Finals of their semifinal duel presentday at the Makati Coliseum.

Anthony Washington played with his usual high, energy to finish with 16 points and 11 rebounds for the Painmasters, who also got key support from Ronnie Magsanoc with 15 in the Finals of Dy and Jo Cushing.

"Our second unit stepped up in this game," said coach Caloy Garcia after his Painmasters frustrated the Wizards' bullish rearound-straight title.

"I think this is the first time it happened that we had a balanced scoring."

The pair of Welcoat and Mercafe will meet in the finals for the 18th time since 1996. "The pressure that we can write the finals," said Garcia.

It was a disappointing finish for the top-seeded Wizards, whose campaign was highlighted by an amazing 13-game winning streak.

After trailing 29-30 at halftime, the Painmasters, said Cushing on the scoring of Cushing and Marvin Ortiguerra in the third, 42-38, lost in the third quarter.

Washington and Dy then rattled back-to-back triples that gave Welcoat its first double-digit advantage, 60-50.

The Painmasters, who trailed 3-11 at the start, wasted but of the perimeter while the Wizards lost their offensive spark in the second half.

The Wizards were held to six points in the third period, shooting only two of 16 attempts. The rest of their four points came on free throws.

Four fourth-year shooting compound of the Wizards' woes in the final quarter, where they made only six of their 14 gift shots.

Magnolia PELI teammate Jojo Lastimosa put up 16 points, 50-44, at the 9:33 mark, but Cushing and Dy repelled the Wizards' comeback.

"We wanted close but I told them not to panic," said Garcia. "We took it a quarter at a time. I told them to work hard on defense and the offense will come."

Jay-B Reyes sparked the Painmasters' run in the second quarter that narrowed the gap, 24-28, as Washington banked-in the corner, 26-26.

SABIS TUESDAY
(Rizal Coliseum)
10 n.m.—Army
Swisco Magnolia
Hi-Fi Jamaican
vs PH pesos
4 p.m.—Welcoat
vs Mercafe (Game 1
of best-of-five finals)

CHESTER Tolentino of Welcoat tries to wriggle out of a double team by Warner Thuloz and Arwind Santos of Magnolia during their game yesterday. JOSE LANDINGIN

Top scorers:
WELCOAT 87—Washington 16, Dy 15, Cushing 13, Ortiguerra 11, Magsanoc 10, Reyes 7, Sanchez 5, Bagtazo 3, Sagmani 2, Jacinto 0

MAGNOLIA (Hi-Fi) 84—Santos 18, Lim 15, Hodges 13, Thuloz 9, Mendoza 6, Alolino 6, Medina 5, Ocampo 5, Dela Cruz 4, Lastimosa 4, Bagtas 2, Sta. Maria 2, Sagmani 2, Jacinto 0

Quarters: 18-30, 42-38, 60-50, 87-84

Do-or-die tiff today for Kings, Beermen

SAN MIGUEL Beer and Barangay Ginebra believe that desire and proper execution of plans will determine the outcome of their rough and riveting semifinal series.

And both teams agree there will be little or no adjustments to be made when they decide in a rubber match today at the Araneta Coliseum who will get to the Gold Matador PBA-Philippine Cup finals against the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals.

The Kings threw a 10-point lead but rallied to blast Purefoods Jumpers in the last three seconds to survive a 94-92 victory Wednesday that pushed the best-of-five semifinal series affair to the limit.

"We'll definitely go for the number," said Jeff Weeks, following an explosive 24-point, 11-rebound output that helped the Kings fix the series at 2-2.

"It's going to be as tough and as intense as in the first four games," added Monk, referring to Game 1, which saw the Kings ace ABC5 starting at 7:30 tonight.

Cagayan is also anticipating a fierce showdown.

"I will boil down to who can recover better," said Cagayan. "If they play their style better or we underfoot play our game."

The struggling, the first four games of the semifinals were to the team which refused to bog down under pressure and managed to survive in plays.

In Game 1, the Beermen battled through an deadlocks and 11 lead changes before inserting an 18-5 run in the final period and starting off Ginebra's late charge.

Game 2 saw the Kings lock out from a dead-lock at 71 to post a commanding 82-74 spread they never relinquished until the end.

The Beermen won Game 3 by holding the Kings scoreless for almost six minutes during the later half of the fourth quarter.

Coach Jong Uichico and the Beermen, however, failed to follow that final defensive game plan in Game 4 and the Kings pulled off the upset.

"That's the defensive and offensive game plan. It would not have come down to that but (Cagayan's game-winner)," said Uichico.

Uichico is hoping there won't be another breakdown in their defensive strategy this time.

"It's going to be real close. There will be no blowouts because both teams will do everything to win this game," he said.

Coach Siot Tanquingcen said he has great respect for his former mentor (Uichico) but added he's confident his things will deliver. Jane Navarro

Uichico to refs: Don't take sides in Game 5

UICHICO: I remain t

PLAYERS against Barangay Ginebra and its boisterous crowd unceremoniously thrown up, posting losses at a dreadful rate. What more if the referees come into play?

That much Jong Uichico is asking the referees not to take sides when his San Miguel Beermen clash with the Barangay Ginebra Kings in the rubber match of their PBA series today.

"It's not easy to blame the refs because we lost the game," said Uichico following a 94-92 setback against the Kings Wednesday. "All we're asking for is to be given a fair shake of the officiating. They should call it both ways."

Game 4 statistics showed the Gin Kings taking 20 more free throws than its opponent for three games (38, Dickies said there were two non-calls that hurt his team in the endgame.

"Whenever you play Ginebra, you always come to an underdog," he said. "It's like playing five against six because of the crowd.

"Now, if the referees will give 20 foul shots to Ginebra and missed just 10 to Beermen twice, then we will not only be playing against six."

The Beermen were also unnerved with overlook—27-21—with their starters getting slapped a total of 16 minutes as against the 13 called on the first five of the Kings.

Ato Mendi, who played with almost no relief while fanning the Beermen's frontline, fetched a four foul in 42 minutes of action. Ronnie Magsanoc and Andy Seigle, however, finished the game with four fouls each.

Mo Bolomboy and Omadon Fontanosas had five fouls apiece and Cesar Dingcong four, while Danny Seigle, Dennis Rufa, Glenn Rondez and Danny Ildefonso had three each. Jane Navarro

Classic

SPECTATOR

Al S. Henderson

WHAT a classic!

It is mundane. Everything in a drop-called classic is great, transcend, beyond death, obscurity or oblivion.

The art of like Gogh is classic. The music of Mozart is classic. The genre of Michael Jordan is classic.

Lennox Lewis and David Tua knockouts have just created another classic in sports. Their quarrelled match in the Australian Open on Wednesday was the stuff that makes sporting memories classic.

Lewis, who also fought to watch it on HBO Sports, the cable TV that, thank God, mistakenly ran live the Australian Open in overdue.

It was one of the most extraordinary ten encounters I've seen in a long, long while.

Already, it brought back memories of Gatemi-Bang, Leon-Shavers, even Sampson-Agassi when Agassi was still the Agassi of old.

At 34, Agassi has shown signs of wear, the ball staff. He straight-set, quarrelled but to finger Sidney on Tuesday should make him rethink about his priorities. I see his career Agassi, the winner of eight Grand Slam titles, has still after the debacle. "I would suggest that his (Sydney) new opponents don't look to our his ad-vice."

And this one is coming from the same man who won the memorable Open four times.

But what the Federer-Agassi match was, on one-sided at a four-round-one fight in the Colosseum of Sydney, the Hyatt-Nelson-Jam encounter was a classic in thrill, excitement and suspense. He our from the packed crowd at Rod Laver Arena in Melbourne last my sitting which of the two would win.

It was so close it could be likened to the last US presidential election, when neither Bush nor Gore had the clear edge just hours before America went to vote in November 2000.

Never mind that the tennis mind four hours and five minutes. Final score: Hewitt winning: 6-3, 6-2, 1-6, 3-6, 10-8. The fifth and last set alone was a killer: 1 hour, 41 minutes.

Nobody says that long is a battle and comes out of it sane, let alone in one robust piece.

"I just kept hanging in there," said Lewis. "I had opportunities to break. In the end, it paid off once again."

If he had said, "I almost died out there," nobody would have doubted him.

At last count, the tenth-seeded Hellenbach opponent set to open the third-seeded Hewitt.

See almost alone, in a snap. Hewitt would come back, like a jackpotter shaking from members, snatching crucial points from improbable situations that eventually drew down.

But if the pro-Hewitt crowd found every minute of it—Hewitt being in Australia—the non-Aussies who had the fortune of watching the match shared every second of it.

In the classic, everybody was partisan only to no one but the match.

It was a battle that had to witness. Only a superfan.

Yesterday, aiming to become the first Aussie to win the crown in 26 years in the Australian Open's centennial, survived it by a thread—no matter that he won the votes in deciding game at love as Hellenbach finally fell prey to the combined pressure of the crowd and the Aussie hurler that was Hewitt.

Hewitt's semifinal opponent today beginning at 6:00 p.m. is Andy Roddick, "The Rocket" from America. Roddick is No. 2 but history is on Hewitt's side, having beaten the American twice in their last two encounters.

Will the match be another classic?

I can't wait to watch it—again at 10:00 figure, the weary cursor of dinners.

LETTUCE'S Cherry Rose Pascuzzaga slams over a off Reina Ferlas, East (5) and Desiree Hernandez of La Salle.

Baguio training for SEAG track bets from schools

By Mars Anthony Reyes

MEMBERS of the national track and field team from the UAAP and NCAA schools have been given permission to train in Baguio along with the rest of the athletes team competing in this year's Southeast Asian Games.

Athletics president Go Teng Kok yesterday met with representatives of the country's top colleges and universities who supported the move to send the athletes to high-altitude training in Baguio for the SEAG scheduled May 27-Jun. 2 in Metro Manila and three other provinces and venues.

The athletes will be quartered at the Southeast Camp to prepare them for different international competitions before the SEAG.

The Philippines is hoping to win 110 to 115 gold medals this year after bringing home nine out of eight golds—the most among all the national sports associations—during the 2003 and 2001 SEAG, respectively.

"I understand that some of my athletes are scholars of those two leagues, and while my athletes are committed to the flag, they also have their studies to think of," said Go.

As he promises an experience, the student athletes will be cross-enrolled in Baguio schools.

Tigresses roar past Lady Tams

By Nassang B. Castillo

SAINTO Tomas rode thirteen Florescent's brilliance in the classic yesterday to trip education for Eastern, 16-20, 25-15, 17-25, 25-14, 15-14, and earn at least a tie for the top ranking in the Hunter's Final-Four semifinals.

The 6-foot athlete starred another old reliable act, stepping up in the absence of another Kim Go Ya Kang as she delivering champion Tigresses wrapped up their elimination assignment with an 11-1 tally.

UST can earn top seeding outright if La Salle loses against FEC on Sunday. The Lady stylists, meanwhile, improved to 10-1 after a 20-25, 21-25, 25-17, 27-25 conquest of Letran in the second game of the third collegiate.

Pia Bautista ended its campaign with only two wins to show in 12 games.

In the event the Lady Archers win over the Lady Legends, Santo Tomas will be relegated to second spot by virtue of an inferior quotient and will play the No. 3 seed in the Final Four.

The final rankings will be known after the regular double-header that will close the eliminations round on Sunday.

The high-leaping Go Ya Kang was pressed of sore knees and was not utilized in the semi-final and 11-minute match.

But Florescent stepped up her game, reaching the 100 defense with a game-high 22 points, 20 coming from kills.

"It could be a case of easy-degree," said Santo Tomas coach August 'Ito Mortel of Go Ya Kang. "She was willing to play but I chose not to field her."

Nene Bernal, a rival this lead-wouts, dropped in 16 points even as Mary Jean Balse and Bubie de Leon combined for another 22 to complete the four-ad with a scoring run for Sta. Maria.

The Tigresses trailed, 11-12, at the 8-and-out before Balse and Bernal savaged a dive three of the team's last five points.

Lhuillier-Cebu five outclasses Nationals

STANDINGS	W	L
M. Lhuillier-Cebu City	4	0
RP Training Team	3	1
North Cotabato Blossom	2	2
Shenzhen Coco-Yankers	2	2
Konkuk University-Korea	1	3
Fujian-China	0	4

CEBU CITY—(UNI) champion M. Lhuillier-Cebu City Jewelers caught fire in the final eight minutes and smoked RP-Cebuana Lhuillier 106-96, yesterday to reach the finals of the Mayor Tomas Osmeña Sinulog International Cup at the New Cebu Coliseum here.

Miguel John Belo squeezed alone with 30 points as he joined Bruce Bayla in the deciding 38-7 blitz that took the fight out of the Nationals.

The Jewelers remained spotless in four games while the Nationals, at 3-1, will have to work harder to secure the other finals berth against the remaining North Cotabato Blossom and Qwazen Coco Yankers.

Bob Olanga erected 17 points as the North Cotabato Blazers made mincemeat of the still winless Fujian Province Selection of China, 99-63, while the Huskers, led by Jef Pioneros and Sidney Snodgrass, blasted Konkuk University of South Korea, 99-72.

Both the Blazers and the Huskers have 2-2 cards.

The Jewelers and the Nationals waged a tight, exciting battle for three quarters until that 38-7 salvo that broke the game wide open.

Tanauan batters seal title clash with Nueva Ecija

TALAVERA, Nueva Ecija— Tanauan City drove in five runs in the seventh inning to score a come-from-behind 13-11 win over Makati yesterday in the semifinals of the All High Athletic Invitational Baseball Championships at the Talavera National High School ground here.

The win sent the boys of Tanauan Mayor Alberto Collera in today's finals against defending champion Nueva Ecija, which swatted Isabela, 11-9, in the other semifinal match.

The Batangueños trailed by seven runs in the first two innings but managed to tie the score at 8-all after the sixth.

A hit, a sacrifice, three walks and a Makati error enabled Tanauan to score five runs in the upper seventh and take the lead for good.

Makati tried to rally in the bottom half of the inning, but Jonathan Munoz, who relieved starter Benjo Lantin, gave up only three runs.

"My pitchers did their job and their teammates really helped them in offense. That is the reason for our victory," said Tanauan coach Chito Mercado.

He added his confidence against Nueva Ecija with John Joseph taking the mound for Tanauan in the 1 p.m. winner-take-all game.

Makati will face Isabela for third place earlier at 9 a.m.

Sapalina, "voice" of bikathon, dies

LIPA, "The Poet" Sapalina, the voice of the annual summer cycling fest, passed away yesterday after suffering a stroke. He was 64. The veteran radio sports commentator, whose gritty, blow-by-blow coverage of the Tour is legendary, was rushed to the Chinese General Hospital last Monday. He never regained consciousness and died at 7:20 a.m. Thursday. His remains will be brought to the Funeraria Paz along Avenida Rizal, Quezon City. He started covering the annual race on attacks in the early '70s with the Manila Broadcasting Corporation, providing details to the race through his familiar radio coverage. He is survived by wife Gloria, sons Hubert, Gabriela, Carlo, and daughter Claire, who rushed him to the hospital from their home in Sta. Mesa, Bulacan. Before his death, he was the station manager of dzRH Sapalinas. He received his last Tour last year for dzRH. His remains will be transferred later to his hometown in Bacolor, Pampanga. Interment will be announced later.

SPORTSWATCH

NCFP starts selection process

THE SELECTION process for the country's representatives to the 2026 Southeast Asian (SEA) Games is to be tackled by the Philippines this November, together with the staging of the 75th National Chess Championship. The Nueva Ecija Federation of the Philippines president Go Teng Kok said qualifier tournaments among ranked chess players will be conducted nationwide. The kick-off leg commences with the Region I eliminations at the Mina de Oro Resort Laoag City, Ilocos Norte, on Oct. 18 to 20. The event is to be followed by the Luzon qualifiers convened at Nueva Ecija representation by provincial board member and head of Sports Development Council Bill Joel Rosa, in cooperation with the Northern Luzon Chess Enthusiasts chess club head by lawyer Jemmo Gutierrez. For details, contact Benigno Morales Jr. at 0995-1760007 or Wacky Miguel 09178145511. **Bill Marlo dimandilan**

MCC holds Dalawahan chess

THE TANDEMS of National Master Roland Peter Julius Caesar Marquez of Pinlac, Bataan, and Freeman Boston Judith Pineda of Olongapo City tried their early entries in the first edition of the 2026 MCC-SC-Mayor Tubanadan Dalawahan tournament administrators off at noon-hour one of the club's headquarters at the 4F of J.B.V. Bldg., Mac-Arthur Highway in Dolores, City. Each entry consists of two players and can field a master attended their average standard rating is not over 2000. A total pool of P16,000 with the champions getting the top prize of P5,000 to be shared by participants receiving rules at the end of each before the tournament clocks on wall. CEL-REP 2 and 09184302-1959. Other entry rules are Data brothers Jessa Alonzo and Bella Nacita in others. Who can Might and father-son Dave Christian Flores.

Sports Plus airs world poker

SPORTS Plus will air the third leg of the World Poker Tour from the Caribbean paradise of Aruba at 7 tonight. As an added bit, tour online ambassadors will square off to see how their computer skills translate into live poker before their predominate face each other in a winner-take-all for the grand $500 cash. The convivial online entrants and professionals alike will then clash head-on as they try to secure a guaranteed seat in the cash-rich World Poker Tour Championship. Sports Plus is available on Sky Cable channel 66, Home cable channel 21 and Destiny channel 67. More on the third week, the World Poker Tour is a 13 tournaments played in Casinos all over the world featuring the best poker players in the planet's single-table no-limit hold'em cash prizes.

AGE holds special open house

ASSISTANT to Ayala Greenfield Estates (AGE) this Sunday will have the chance to meet the nominees as well as the first aspects of golf from commissioned architects at the facility's driving range. On the same day, the operating golf architect community selected on the foothills of Mt. Makiling will launch available slots in Phase 2 during a special open house. The new lots are located near the Arbor Trails area of the subdivision where construction is in progress on Day. For a nominal activation fee, every lot buyer is entitled to a free share and membership at the Ayala Greenfield Estates Golf and Country Club. It runs April to June. Interested can activate their Golf and Leisure Club membership for P50,000. Ayala Greenfield Estates is located in Calamba, Laguna, and is accessed southbound via the Calamba-Sta. Rosa Tollway. For inquiries, call 868-0000 or log on to www.ayalagreenfield.com.ph, or e-mail ayala.salesinquiries@gmail.com.ph.

PCC hosts 4-cock derby

FIGHTING cocks and breeders will do battle in another exciting 4-cock derby today at the air-conditioned Pasay City Cockpit with Sagguban Commissioner Willy Sagguban Mini-Toss and Sagguban's 50-foot van as sponsors. Hosts Lito Alcantara, Boy 2 and 5-mill Tito Justin have invited PCCI members Ma. Alex Macapinlac, Joel Mallari, Richard Go, Bonjo Lim, Lito Bonifacio, Ismine Sec. Ramon Revilla, Rudy Salud, William Co, Mes Torres, Joel Fernando, Flamor Manzanares, Ernesto Mediantoyan, Jong Lapid and Jack Cheong, among others. 24 master today in a cash purse of P300,000 with an entry fee of P15,000. Meanwhile, another derby dubbed as the Challenge Cha-Cha-Cha kicks off on Sunday, Jan. 30 featuring a guaranteed purse of P100,000 for an entry fee of only P500. Minimum bet is only P1,100. The champion will get P40,000-second, P20,000-third, P10,000-fourth, P5,000-fifth, P4,000-sixth to 13th, P2,000 Fe inquiries, contact 843-0965, 842-1106 and 846-6768.

Koiigan anniversary tomorrow

THE MEGA-MINGLE PH million Koiigan 11th Anniversary 7 Cock Derby kicks off tomorrow with co-record field. 97 (33 entries confirmed to be action. Hosted by Rudy Ligon and welcomed by Rizaldes Fernando Pineda. The derby meet stakes a guaranteed cash prize of P4 million and a 3 since 2008 Pajero for an entry fee of P12,000 and a minimum bet of P5,000. Substantiated weights for those set to fight in special match square is set today from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Weight limits are from 1.9- 2.4 kg. Ready to welcome everyone are PCSC owners Boy Bautista, Ray Villanueva and Rizaldes Fernando. For more chances Rep. Ronnie Puno and Rhea Antipuesto. Bell Cacho, Hey Dee, engineer Gael Costa, Peter Panadero, Jinx Rodajeno and Cameron Monte.

BASKETBALL WITH BLACK: Champion PBA coach Norman Black gives instructions to players of the NP-Burlington Yeasti cream and the CBT Tigers during the taping of the Burlington Basketball 101 with Norman Black at the University of Santo Tomas gym recently. The instructional program is aired on ABC-5 every Wednesday and Friday, right before the telecast of the PBA Games.

FASTEST GUN: SPCH Christopher Peres (right) receives a certificate of ownership for a Smith & Wesson pistol handed over by Sgt. Jones Wagenhaus president Jaime Ha. Flores for bagging the overall championship in the San Gerardo PHP Cup in Cagayan City recently. The firearm competition among Cib police chiefs from the country's 13 regional areas was officiated by the Cagayan Provincial Police Association and headed by Reps. Sarah & Mason PP distributorship.

Cavaliers tame Grizzlies; Heat torch Raptors

CLEVELAND—LeBron James scored 27 points with a career-high 16 assists and nine rebounds, finishing in pain on a sprained left ankle to lead the Cleveland Cavaliers to a 114-111 victory over Memphis Grizzlies.

It looked as though James' night was over when he twisted his ankle with 9:23 left and the Cavaliers up by 10. But after being helped off the floor, James dramatically returned with 6:43 remaining and helped down the Grizzlies.

"I had to lead my team," James said. "My 90 percent can help us win. I can't be scared. I've got to be a soldier out there."

Donovan Mitchell scored 27 points during the 4 1/2 minutes when James went out—and Jarrett Allen added 22 for the Cavaliers, who improved to an Eastern Conference-best 15-4 at home.

The Cavaliers, playing without starter Max Strus and forward Isaac Okoro, were led by Ja Morant's season-high 36 points.

"We just came back. We had a chance and they were, too, so it's not an excuse," Miller said.

In Washington, Gilbert Arenas scored 23 points, overcoming a career night from Allen Iverson's former high school teammate Whadi Jean Philadelphia for its fourth straight win.

Jaime Jáquez scored 14 of his 22 points in the fourth quarter as the Wizards closed the game with a 12-0 run to win their eighth straight at home and 13th of 15 since New Year's Day. The last four victories have come without Larry Hughes, who has a broken thumb, but Arenas, Brown and Jaquez combined (10 points) have more than compensated for the missing points and defense.

The Nets played without Trevor Ariza, the NBA's scoring leader, but Cam Thomas had his most efficient night of the season, scoring a career-high 52 points and keeping the game close for 3 1/3 quarters. The game had 11 ties and 14 lead changes until Arenas, Brown and Jaquez opened it for Washington's late run.

In Boston, Paul Pierce scored 25 points and Kurt Carbonell had 12 points with 11 rebounds to help Boston down Indiana and spoil Stephen Jackson's return from a 20-game suspension.

Jackson scored 17 points in 38 minutes in his first game back since the Nov. 19 melee against Carmelo Anthony, when Jackson went into the stands and threw a punch at a fan. Jackson followed, struck into the crowd and took several swings at him.

Jermaine O'Neal scored 25 for the Pacers.

Gary Payton had 16 points with nine assists and Richie Davis scored 13 as a reserve for Boston, which won its fourth consecutive home game a night after snapping a nine-game road losing streak.

In Toronto, Marquis Chriss had 30 points and 10 rebounds, and Jeff Green added 23 points as Houston beat Toronto.

Jones went 6-for-11 from the field for the Heat, who have won just six of their last 12 games. O'Neal suggested Jones needed to take more shots after Jones went 3-for-12 from the field in Monday's loss to Philadelphia.

Dwyane Wade had 16 points and 10 assists despite playing with a sore left knee and ankle.

Former Heat player guard Rafer Alston had a career-high 29 points and Chris Bosh added a career-high 27 for the Raptors, who had won their previous five home games.

COMPLETE RESULTS: Boston 100, Indiana 93; Cleveland 114, Memphis 111; Washington 113, Philadelphia 103; Miami 111, Toronto 96; Detroit 91, Denver 91; Houston 102, Minnesota 98; Milwaukee 116, Minnesota 104; Orlando 99, New York 97; Golden State 97, Phoenix 87; Portland 103, New Jersey 101; Utah 104, Sacramento 96; L.A. Clippers 106, L.A. Lakers 94. AP

JAMES

SERENA Williams (right) waits after completing a hard-fought victory over Sharapova in the women's singles semifinals at the Australian Open on Rod Laver Arena at Melbourne Park, Australia. The seventh-seeded Williams overcame two-time champion Sharapova, the fourth seed, who beat her for last year's Wimbledon title.

Williams su
Sharapova,
Davenport

MELBOURNE, Australia—Serena Williams finally beat Maria Sharapova in a big match, overcoming a painful injury to win the Wimbledon champion, 3-6, 7-5, 6-4, Thursday in the Australian Open semifinals.

The seventh-seeded Williams, seeking her seventh Grand Slam title, will face top-seeded Tatiana Dementieva in an all-American final Saturday. Davenport rallied to beat 19th-seeded Nathalie Dechy of France, 3-6, 7-6 (5), 6-4, in the second semifinal.

"I have to stay focused," said Williams, the 2000 Australian Open winner who skipped the tournament last year because of a knee injury. "I think it's so real. It's been such a rough 12 months for me."

The 27-year-old Hungarian, an upset winner over Williams last year in the Wimbledon final and runner-ending WTA championship, served for the match at 5-4 in the second set and again at 5-4 in the third.

"I played from my heart. I didn't take my chances. That's what this game is all about," Davenport said. "The match could have gone either way. The chances when she had to and I did. That's why she's No. 1 and I'm not."

The third set lasted 34 minutes as the crowd in the packed Rod Laver Arena cheered and grunted on every [illegible] not wanting the drama to end.

Without it, the match [illegible] Davenport, "We know each other's games. We know what I can't believe it's over. I feel like we're still playing."

After [illegible] Williams [illegible] set and serving match [illegible] with a string of [illegible]. Williams [illegible] three break points before [illegible]

DAVENPORT Ready for Williams.

Iverson to have MRI on hurting shoulder

PHILADELPHIA—Philadelphia 76ers star guard Allen Iverson missed practice on Tuesday to undergo an MRI on his ailing left shoulder.

Iverson's shoulder has been bothering him for much of the season, but, so far, he has been able to play through the pain.

Still, there has been no indication that the former Georgetown standout will miss Wednesday's game against the Washington Wizards. Iverson was listed as questionable for Monday's game against the Miami Heat, but played 45 points and 11 assists in the Sixers' victory.

The 29-year-old Iverson leads the NBA with 29.1 points per game. He is also fourth in the league in steals (2.24 spg) and fifth in assists (7.5 spg). *Reuters*

IVERSON Eager spectator

Roddick fresher than H

MELBOURNE, Australia—Andy Roddick has freshness on his side as he attempts to redress a big-match imbalance against Lleyton Hewitt in Friday's semi-final encounter between the world number two and three at the Australian Open.

The American second seed has had almost half the on-court workload than the never-say-die Australian in the five matches to the semi-final, but more than might have to stand off Fitness before his home fans.

Roddick has spent a total of 7[illegible] on court in counting through to four, dropping only one set [illegible] way.

By comparison, Rowers, bidding [illegible] come the first home winner of [illegible] of open in almost three decades, [illegible] dreamy two five-set dogfights to [illegible] two matches for a total of 14 h[illegible] court time, raising doubts about [illegible] has left in the tank.

Then there is Hewitt's 9-1 re[illegible]

Future Pacquiaos need enterprising prom

PRO boxing in the Philippines needs a shot in the arm to produce more boxers in the model of a Manny Pacquiao. The sport is on the decline.

Gone are the good old days when many Filipino fighters earned international fame and appreciation because of their prowess in the ring.

The names who put boxing on the global map are already old news to the younger generation. It is also because the business of boxing promotion is no longer profitable. Still, former boxing manager and promoter Southern Samar Gov. Ruel Daza and people should not be behind old time boxers the most. "There is a vital need to stage more boxing promotions in the Philippines if for no other reason than to showcase a fresh Filipino face," he stressed.

In 1996 when I headed the Philippine Amateur Boxing Association, former boxer Ernesto and Daza, then the Senior Deputy Speaker, helped me revive the PBA Press Pamana, a one-liter boxing card for the benefit of deserving and disabled boxers. A substantial amount (the biggest ever on record) was raised from the charity card, with the proceeds credited by the accounting firm Sycip Gorres Velayo and Co.

By subscribing itself to an audit, the PBA set a fine example for other fund raisers, clarifying speculative responses from all sectors, notably its generous sponsors.

During his term, Daza banned for the weekend of pro boxing to the Philippines by allowing indecent exposure that embarrassing people may once more engage in fight promotion.

That plan will not be unheeded this time around.

Starting at 6 p.m. tomorrow, international matchmakers Lou Sarmiento will stage a double main event card at the Cuneta Astrodome featuring Filipino boxers against visiting fighters from Indonesia and Thailand.

In the 12-round championship bout, undefeated Cebuano Mark Jason Melligen tackle Boxing Indonesian mainstay[illegible] title against OPBF No. 2 contender Mart Sobbi of Indonesia. In the other 12-round contest, The No. 2 flyweight Dennyson Sor Gregori takes on former Philippine champion Edgar Sinfuego, conqueror of the unsanctioned 12 rounds.

CLEAN LIVING

Marinelo R. Mago

Filipino schoolboys getting Filipino foreigners against visiting fighters from Indonesia and Thailand.

In the 12-round championship bout, undefeated Cebuano Mark Jason Melligen tackle Boxing Indonesian mainstay[illegible] title against OPBF No. 2 contender Mart Sobbi of Indonesia. In the other 12-round contest, The No. 2 flyweight Dennyson Sor Gregori takes on former Philippine champion Edgar Sinfuego, conqueror of the unsanctioned 12 rounds.

Billed as the [illegible] speaker Mapúa's home to a [illegible]

Only 20 years old, Cebuano boxing sensation Melligen [illegible]

"Dinapuan ko ayo sa [illegible] round. I will stop [illegible] rounds," said the 5-foot-4 sports an impressive record [illegible] 15 by knockouts, against [illegible] 5-2 win-loss record. Melligen [illegible] held in Jakarta, Mapúa will [illegible] three Indonesian opponents [illegible] interested to preview [illegible] event," stressed Mapúa, [illegible] The ring career in the [illegible] where he has only three [illegible] fights.

For his part, promoter [illegible] "We need to help and develop [illegible] Ako-Bisaya. I think he deserves the opportunity for a world title." In the same [illegible]

urvives battles for title

2 eagles lift Ogilvie to top of Classic

NEW YORK—Joe Ogilvie posted two eagles on the way to an eight-under par 64 which put him in a few ways for the lead after the first round of the $1.7 million Bob Hope Classic on Wednesday.

Ogilvie recorded 3 birds at the par-five second and 13th holes to join Ted Purdy, Steffy Weldorf, Fred Funk and Robert Damron at the top of the leaderboard as the 90-hole tournament got under way in La Quinta.

Four-time PGA Tour champion Fred Couples, Tom Lehman and Lee Janzen are being tipped as this week's event in the Californian desert. Most of Wednesday's leading scores came on the Samarkand and Arnold's Palmer courses.

Five players were one stroke off the pace on seven-under 65, 1998 winner Fred Couples, Franklin Langham, Nick Watney, Neal Lancaster and Brenden Pappas.

Defending champion Phil Mickelson was among a group of seven golfers on 66.

With the top four in the world rankings, number one Vijay Singh, Tiger Woods, Ernie Els and David Gossen, all taking the week off, Mickelson holds top billing.

The left-hander lost Skip Kendall in a play-off here last year before going on to land the US Masters in April.

Mickelson, playing on the Samarkand course, made a sterling start with birdies on three of his first six holes, the 12th, 13th and 15th. He also picked up shots at the 18th, first, ninth and seventh but bogeyed the second.

"No matter how hard or how easy a golf course is you've got to make the shots," Mickelson told reporters. "You're still got to make the putts and you're still got to make the putts.

"The recipe for doing well here is just to relax and enjoy the day. Sometimes you just get an opening, as tight as days like this, that it can cost you." Canada's Mike Weir, the winner here in 2003, started out with a one under 71.

David Duval, who produced a closing 59 to lift the title in 1999, stumbled to a 19-over 82.

Reuters

CHAMPIONS: Russia's Tatiana Totmianina (left) and Maxim Marinin parlay in their free programs at the European figure skating championships pairs final at Palavela stadium in Turin, northern Italy, Jan. 26. They won the gold.

Honda, Toyota mull F1 rival

LONDON—Japanese car giants Honda and Toyota have sided with manufacturers planning a rival series to Formula One by issuing a joint statement setting out their vision for the sport's future.

While a spokesman for the Grand Prix World Championship (GPWC) said the cars had not formally joined BMW, Daimler-Chrysler and Renault in the group, Wednesday's statement made clear that they were in agreement.

The move was a boost for the GPWC, whose former race series president after FIA-owned Formula announced last week that they had agreed unilaterally to remain in the existing championship until 2012.

A source close to the carmakers said the cars's action, despite being founder members of the GPWC, had fuelled the anger of the Japanese to the extent that they approached their European rivals asking for a meeting.

The statement said all five carmakers met to discuss their views about the future after the expiry of the existing 'Concorde Agreement' in 2007 which governs the sport's commercial matters.

"All participants have unanimously agreed upon a comprehensive set of governing principles which they believe represent an appropriate framework for the sport," it said.

Some of the objectives

• To keep grand prix motor racing at the pinnacle of motorsport.

• To provide the basis of a long-term plan for the prosperity of grand prix motor racing and its stakeholders. *AP*

Hewitt in semis

Roddick (featuring recovers to the French Open, US Open and last year's Masters Cup.

Roddick finds Hewitt a difficult opponent to beat and went allowing for the Injun faster for Australian further will set-up his every point as he continues with his dream of becoming the first home winner of his national open since Mark Edmondson in 1976.

"He's got an advantage, he's in bed already tonight," said Hewitt. *AFP*

moters

brushed off the common misconception that Filipino promoters bring foreign teams here who have no chance of winning. "With a small fee, 3 by the GPW and that speaks very well about his credentials," added Joe Sarreal, son of the late Lope "Napo" Sarreal, the grand old man of boxing. Pepe Sarreal, by the way, will be auditioned in the International Boxing Hall of Fame (one participant opposite) in Canastota, New York, during glittering ceremonies on June 9 to 12.

The young Weird, his manager Joy Onano, Sarreal, Rodrigo and Bangkok lawyer Norong Rungmakol, handler of Thai boxer Sirichpol, glanced for Sweden's weekly Pilil Pasion sponsored by Red Bull and Agly Color at the Manila Hotel.

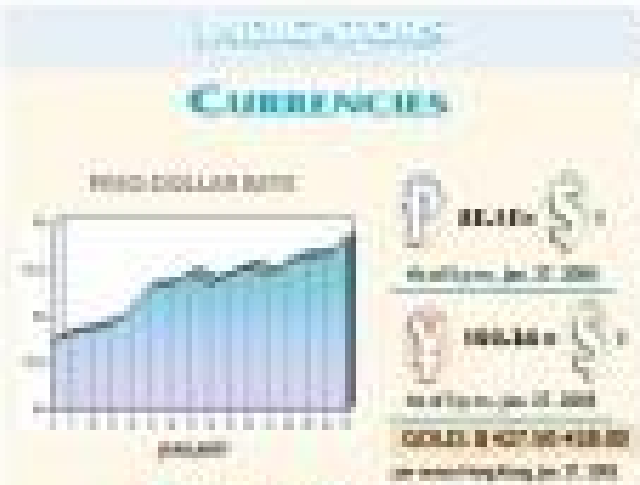
"My boxer (Sarreal) is no pang" Norong assured the media during a pre-fight interview.

BUSINESS

John Paul D. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariñas

APLI
Self-Adhesive Labels

Gov't eyes P140B/yr from tax measures



By Philkrin Y. Reyes

THE GLORIA administration's modified revenue-raising measures will generate for the national coffers P140 billion in additional revenue a year, estimates of the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council or Ledac showed.

The amount is more than the P80 billion in incremental revenue originally proposed by the administration. The increase in the target was brought about by the various modifications made on the proposed measures.

These measures, if approved, will enable the government to accelerate the attainment of its medium-term goal of achieving a zero deficit or balanced budget position.

President Macapagal-Arroyo earlier said the government needed P80 billion in incremental revenue a year to wipe out the deficit, which last year stood at P146.1 billion, by 2010. With the modified measures, according to the Department of Finance, this goal can be achieved by 2008.

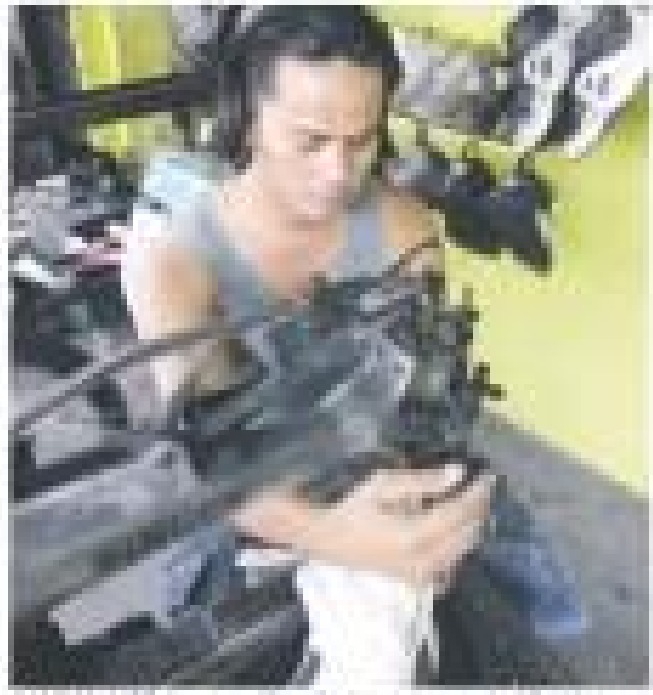
In a meeting the other day, the Ledac—composed of top officials of both the executive and legislative branches of the government—came up with the new estimates after considering all the modifications in the proposals. The estimates were presented by Secretary Gabriel Claudio.

The Ledac agreed that the immediate implementation of these measures was necessary to prevent further deterioration of the country's financial position.

The Congress earlier said the passage of the six laws that would raise the excise tax on cigarettes and alcohol, would result in an additional revenue of P81 billion. The amount was higher than the previous target of only around P71 billion.

The Ledac said the government could also raise P80 billion from the Attrition Act of 2005, P24 billion from the tax amnesty bill, P56 billion from the proposed increase in value-added tax rate from 10 to 12 percent, P28 billion

FOR MORE



A SHOWSTOPPER, unaware of how the recent passage of a bill raising value-added tax from 10 percent to 12 percent will affect him, does his daily routine in a shoe factory in Manila. President Macapagal-Arroyo, however, assures the public that safety nets are in place to shield the most marginal sectors from the impact of the tax hikes. AFP

BSP expects inflation to drop by end of Q1

By Gov'o C. Bumbac

THE INFLATION rate is expected to decline by the end of the first quarter but will still average higher this year at 6.4-6.5 percent than the 6 percent in 2004, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (central bank) said.

In a briefing on inflation, BSP Managing Director for research Lilian Cunningcuela said: "Inflation should decline to below 5 percent by the end of 2005."

The BSP updates its own projections and outlook on inflation every quarter, all its projections and the government's indicated target are for the updated 2000-based consumer price index.

Based on the latest numbers, he said the government's revised inflation target range of 5-6 percent for the year would be unrealistic.

The new target range of 5-6 percent, up from the previous target of 4-5 percent, will be kept as a "fighting target." Cunningcuela said that with appropriate and concerted intervention measures, there was a possibility that inflation would have been within the BSP's own projection and eventually fall within the target.

For January, the BSP expects inflation to hit 7.6-7.9 percent.

For 2005, the new target rate set by the government at 4-5 percent.

The BSP's latest projection was a foreign exchange assumption range of P55.01 to 55. The recent sharp appreciation of the peso, however, is not seen to significantly affect the inflation projection.

The BSP is expecting the following key pressures on inflation: the sustained uncertainty in the world oil prices despite the recent easing in the global market, the possible uptick in food prices due to the El Niño dry spell and possible foreign exchange pressures.

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DIRECTION TO MAIN

By Clarissa L. Batino

A UNIT of International Container Terminal Services Inc. has signed a contract with the Subic Port Authority for the operation of a container terminal in Okinawa, Japan starting January next year.

Subic International Container Terminal Inc., which will operate the terminal in Okinawa, in 60-percent owned by ICTSI and 40 percent by its stevedoring companies operating in the Subic Port such as Eddie Kuan Co. Ltd., Okinawa Kuan Co. Ltd., Sangyo Kuan Co. Ltd., Ishi-ki Kuan Co. Ltd., UYS Co. Ltd. and Eadaya Kuan Co. Ltd.

The Subic project is the latest addition to ICTSI's portfolio of overseas port operations. The company, controlled by the Razon family, operates the International Container Terminal in Brazil and the Batangas Container Terminal in Poland.

In the Philippines, ICTSI's flagship venture is the Manila International Container Terminal. It also operates the MGB Terminal in Subic Bay Freeport, Zambales; Nasipit Terminal in Butuan, and the Mabini Wharf in Cebu.

A 10-year lease agreement would be signed by the ICTSI unit and the Subic Port Authority following the issuance of the authority to operate by the Office of the Japanese Prime Minister.

"We realize that very few public ports in Japan have been allowed to private operators on a long-term basis, and ICTSI, a foreign company, has been given the rare privilege," Enrique Razon Jr., ICTSI chair and president, said in a statement.

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JOB Market

THREAT OF CREDIT DOWNGRADE

With Attrition Act, RP hopes to keep credit rating

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance has been updating Moody's investors forum on the progress of the government's fiscal reform efforts, hoping that the incremental savings these would spare the Philippines from a costly credit rating downgrade.

Finance officials, in a teleconference with officials from Moody's yesterday morning, reported the passage of the Attrition Act of 2005 and the latter than expected budget deficit for 2004, among others, to give the foreign evaluators a picture of the pace of the government efforts to sort out its fiscal problem.

"We gave them an update, which are obviously hope will have a positive effect on the rating reviews they are conducting," Finance Undersecretary Eric Herbosa told reporters.

He said, however, that he could not predict how the updates would influence Moody's decision, whether or not to pursue its plan to downgrade the Philippines' credit rating.

Moody's is currently reviewing the country's fiscal climate, and is expected to announce its decision next month. Last year, it warned that the country's credit rating would experience downside pressures if the Arroyo administration would fail to implement right away the proposed revenue-generating measures.

Moody's morning came before the attrition law was enacted in December last year.

The 2005 is hoping that the passage of the tax law law in December as well as that of the Attrition Act of 2005 early in this week will ease negative pressures on its credit rating. The country's credit rating with Moody's stands at Ba2, or two notches below investment grade.

The government expects to raise P71 billion in additional revenue a year from the measures law, and another P126 billion from the Attrition Act.

The Attrition Act of 2005 is a reward and penalty system for employees and officials of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs. It seeks to give monetary incentives to those who will meet their revenue collection targets, and to dismiss from service those who will fail to do so.

The DOF is also hoping that the payover done for 2004 will improve the country's fiscal image. Last year, the government was able to keep its budget deficit at P146.1 billion, or below the ceiling of P147.6 billion.

The government is keeping its figures crossed that Moody's would not below the level of ratings from Standard & Poor's, which recently lowered the Philippines' rating by a notch, likely distinguished the Philippines' long-term foreign currency debt to BB from BB-.

A credit rating downgrade normally increases a government's borrowing cost, as creditors see the ratings as a reason to seek higher interest rates.

Higher borrowing cost would aggravate the government's already precarious fiscal standing.

Legacy of transparency

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

COMMENTARY

DURING the Jan. 25 meeting of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Anti-Smuggling (CO-CAS), the Bureau of Customs presented a P680-million automation project that would curb smuggling and minimize corruption.

The Arroyo Agriculture representative opposed the project. However, according to one of the Arroyan leaders, there is one tool that will cost nothing as long as the political will to use it is there: transparency.

It is this transparency that has been responsible for the drop in the smuggling rate of containerized vans carrying agricultural products, from 40 percent in late 2003 one per-cent in three months.

Frustrated

At the beginning of 2003, agricultural producers of pork, chicken and vegetables felt total frustration over the widespread smuggling.

According to Gen. Brenga-gutes Paperon, then head of the Presidential Task Force on Anti-Smuggling, the smuggling rate for containerized vans had reached 40 percent.

The board in the private sector was that government officials who were supposedly the ones were the enforcers in the smuggling. No one could do anything about it since it was only the government personnel who knew what was really going on.

However, this soon changed. Members of the Presidential Security Guard and former representatives were all allowed to fully inspect the vans. With this new transparency, the smuggling rate dropped to less than one percent within three months.

The case of carrots

To understand what this means to the lives of farmers, let us take the case of carrots.

Eighty thousand cavan farmers in the Cordillera would break even at the price of P13. They would usually sell their carrots for P16. But when the carrots from China started to glut into the country with no health certificates, sold in Metro Manila for P6, the gravel carrot price plunged. The Cordillera farmers suffered enormously.

Hardly after the inspection of suspected vans began, 75 containers of vegetables valued at approximately P900 million were seized. The price of carrots went back to their normal levels, thus saving the livelihood of 60,000 Cordillera farmers.

Undervaluation

A recently signed customs administrative order largely drafted by the private sector now allows transparency.

As contained in the order, both the control transaction value of the imported item and its published average wort to market price must be submitted for each consignment.

In the past, the customs assessor had the sole discretion whether to bring up for review a case of possible undervaluation. This can imagine the for this and negotiated for kind gifts.

An imported product might be undervalued by as much as 50 percent of the usual market price. Many local producers, who had to pay 10 percent TRF on the actual price, had to compete with importers who would pay only one percent of this price because of undervaluation.

In a month, many firms closed down. Instead of helping local producers many jobs, the government was killing these producers, upsetting employment and poverty.

But just as transparency solved the problem of the smuggled vans, it can handle other issues to help solve the problem of undervaluation.

Possible loophole

There is one remaining potential problem. What if suspected undervaluation case goes to the Valuation and Classification Review Committee (VCRC). The good track previously done as a result of transparency might become undone. All the VCRC members are from the Bureau of Customs, thus there is no check and balance. It is here that we should also institute transparency.

Even if Client finds the private sector cannot be VCRC members, they still must have access to these meetings as observers. In this way, any mischief may be uncovered. The main fact that the private sector is there will already have served its purpose as a deterrent.

Other success stories

In the early '90s, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the most successful government livelihood program in Asia was the Department of Trade and Industry's (DTI) Taliwas Sa Tao program, which was implemented at night (nuts. I at liberate a lot go just I of this success to the principle of transparency that then DTI Secretary Jose Concepcion Jr. instilled in the program. In the provincial committees, four out of five of the nine-member committee members were from the private sector. With this transparency, political pressure and contemplation could be minimized.

For the Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects during the latter part of President Fidel Ramos' term, regional chairs received the green sector were appointed and given the mandate to monitor the projects.

Because of this kind of transparency there were hardly any complaints of corruption reported for any of the projects.

Legacy of transparency

Concepcion was instrumental in proposing transparency for the contribution pots both and Congressmen and the Department of National Defense.

This was done to the presence of high level private sector individuals such as former Finance Secretary Vicente Jaime and former Trade Secretary Vicente Paterno.

Concepcion said that when the DBO agreed to this, they did much to ensure the project was of huge resources.

It is a legacy of transparency that the CDCEE will have be kind when is finally fulfills its mission.

It is this same legacy that will do wonders in curbing corruption and hacking good governance actually.

(The author is the chair of Agrimatch, a private sector initiative; former Cabinet secretary for Rural, Agrarian Reform, Agriculture and Fisheries; and former undersecretary for agriculture and trade and industry. For inquiries and suggestions, email agrimatch@yahoo.com or visit us at MARC.)

Mendoza: 3 Asian carriers eye direct flights to Clark

By Clarissa S. Batino

THREE Asian carriers are now seeking the go-ahead of the Immigration Department before they can resume direct flights to and from Clark International Airport, according to Transport Secretary Leandro Mendoza.

So far, only South Korea's Asiana Airlines by virtue of a treaty between the former United States military air base in Pampanga. It flies to and from Clark five times weekly from Incheon, Korea.

Mendoza refused to name the carriers. But a transportation official said that among the airlines mentioned were Air Asia of Malaysia and its subsidiary Thai Air Asia.

"There is also another Asian carrier called Jetstar, but it wants to fly to Manila from Singapore, not to Clark," Mendoza said in person. "There are three airlines from three different Asian countries that are interested to fly directly to Clark."

In an effort to decongest the Manila air hub, the Arroyo administration has been trying to attract more airlines to operate in Clark.

Mendoza said the government would facilitating investors, such as exempt commercial airlines from paying aeronautical fees and other charges in Clark Airport for at least six months.

"We want to attract airlines into Clark so we are giving incentives," said the transport chief.

Mendoza said many low-cost Asian carriers would like to operate in the Philippines. Jetstar, Air Asia and Thai Air Asia are all low-cost operators.

Teresa Kho-Sabio, executive director of the Civil Aeronautics Board, said that last year Asia had submitted documents to support its application for a foreign air carrier's permit to conduct charter flights from Singapore to Manila.

The CAB chief said that Air Asia of Malaysia and its Thai subsidiary have also informed the transportation department of their interest to fly to the Philippines.

SEC approves Manila Water IPO

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission (SEC) has approved the plans of Manila Water Co., Inc., the water distribution arm of the Ayala group of companies, to offer part of its shares to the public.

SEC documents showed that MWC's plans to offer 824.25 million shares – in between P3 and P6.50 each – which would bring in as much as P5.35 billion in proceeds.

The money will be used to expand capacities and put more of metropolitan Manila's sewerage systems.

The public offering will consist of 550 million primary shares of MWC, with the balance coming from MWC's shares held by Ayala Corp., United Utilities Pacific Holdings BV, SPI Capital Corp. and employees.

About half of the local offer, equivalent to 417.38 million shares, will be set aside for institutional investors.

The rest will be sold to local investors with SPI Capital as local underwriter.

In line with the offering, SPI Capital, Ayala and United Utilities granted MWC's international underwriter UBS Investment Bank an option to buy up to 730.69 million MWC shares within 30 days from the start of trading on the stock market.

Investment banks target March 17 as the listing date for the shares.

MWC generated P4.3 billion in revenues last year, up from P3.76 billion in 2003.

Net earnings, on the other hand, stood at P1.34 billion last year from P1.15 billion in 2003.

Last year, the International Finance Corp. (IFC), the private sector arm of the World Bank, invested $95 million in Manila Water, its first in the water sector in East Asia.

The investment gave IFC an equity of around 9 percent in the water distribution company, which currently serves more than four million residents in the east zone of the MWSS franchise.

The water company was formed only in August 1997. From a concession that inherited crumbling, inconsistent water network losses (up to 63 percent), Manila Water managed to turn the company around to become one of the country's fastest growing organizations. Its capital investments (totaling more than P8 billion) allowed the company to achieve significant improvements in billed volume and operating efficiencies.

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Foreign firms to bid for Manila plant

By Abigail L. Mo

FIVE local and foreign firms and consortia have expressed plans to bid for the 200-megawatt (MW) Manila Thermal Power Plant, the first idle plant of the National Power Corp. to be put on the auction block.

Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (Psalm) vice president for asset valuation and disposal Perlita Tampinco said three of them are from foreign.

On its bid invitation, Psalm gave interested firms until Jan. 14 to indicate their intent to participate in the bidding. Actual bids have to be submitted by Feb. 28.

Psalm turned to selling Napocor's idle plants after finalizing the sale of six operating plants last year—four hydroelectric and one coal-fired.

Nine of these idle or decommissioned plants are scheduled to be sold within the year.

Psalm recently opened the bidding for the 54-MW Cebu II Power Plant in Toledo City, Cebu.

Interested parties have until Feb. 8 to submit their letters of intent, and until March 15 to submit the actual bids.

Originally designed as a baseload plant connected to the Cebu grid, the Cebu II plant had three generating units commissioned between May 1982 and April 1983. The plant was shut down on Dec. 1, 1997.

Since that time, Psalm said the plant's auxiliaries, including its steam system, condensate equipment, pumps and controls, control equipment, gauges and panels remained functional and in good working condition.

After the Manila and Cebu II plants, Psalm will be selling off the 22.5-MW General Santos plant in April and the 104-MW Aplaya plant in May.

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ECOMPOINT CLUB ENCORE

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Tax . . .

From page B1

from the proposed expansion of the VAT exemptions of several products and services, and P51 billion from the proposed capping of allowable input credits.

The Attrition Act is a reward and penalty system for employees and officials of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs. It provides for the granting of monetary incentives to BIR and BOC people who will meet their revenue collection targets, and the imposition of penalty which may include dismissal from service, on those who will fail to meet their targets.

In the meantime, the twin proposals related to VAT are expected to generate over P66 billion in annual revenues.

Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, a member of the Ledac, earlier expressed confidence that Congress would throw its support to the pending tax measures, although some legislators had expressed reservations over the tax proposals.

"These (legislators) are aware, as much as we, in the executive branch, are of the importance of passing these measures," he said.

The Ledac said it was expecting the VAT proposal to be approved by the bicameral conference committee of the House and the Senate by February.

Semirara raked by court order

SEMIRARA PRODUCTS

Cool Treats, Sure Deals
promo
SURE DEALS
COOL TREATS
Brother International Philippines Corporation
brother

COCKTALES

Victor C. Aganon

SEMIRARA Coal Corp. has been ordered by an Antique court to stop exploiting newly-a-swath of its mining concession, the subject of an overlapping claim from a gold-mining consortium.

Judge Antonio Bautista of the Regional Trial Court of San Jose Branch 13 issued the writ of preliminary injunction way back on Oct. 6, 2003, but the company has apparently kept the existence of the adverse ruling as well as the court case from its ongoing foreign and local roadshow.

Semirara already has disclosures and latest reports to the Philippine Stock Exchange were silent about that suit, as well as a related court case filed way back in November 2003 in a Caloocan court.

Investors is being tipped off as by next bet stock "similar to Pil Oleopaso," whose share price has more than doubled since in November offering, according to the market grapevine, the Semirara secondary offering is more than five times oversubscribed.

The twin court cases had been filed by sisters Cy. Lim of PSCL Development Corp., who claims his 367 hectares of forest grazing land leased to him by the government had illegally been taken over and included in the 5,832-ha mining concession of Semirara.

According to court documents, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources had already cancelled Lim's 25-year lease, originally set to expire in 2009, for alleged non-payment of rent and failure to submit annual grazing reports.

Lim disputes this, saying the DENR had already accepted the late payments and penalties as well as the life submissions of the reports.

The contested land, which had been fenced off, bulldozed, and built over with roads and structures by the Consunjis, the majority shareholders of Semirara, also right next to the latter firm's Panian mine.

Terminal 3 talkwinds

THE GOVERNMENT has set a June 15 opening for the controversial Terminal 3, but foreign airlines are balking at being rushed into moving in unless the airport authority complies with a 10-point operational checklist.

In addition, the foreign airlines still await the so-called interim guidelines for the construction of offices and lounges and, at the very least, a certification of completion of the terminal or an assembly from the terminal contractor allowing the airlines to start office renovation.

According to the industry grapevine, the airlines are asking for a six-month lead time to renovate the terminal offices and train ground handlers or, in a crunch, a minimum of three-four months, provided the previous space allocations granted by Piatco, the grabbidder operator of Terminal 3 prior to the government takeover, are kept by the Manila International Airport Authority.

Merry-go-round

▲ LOTTS has moved the Filipino country manager to Indonesia, Ramon Mariveles, back to the Philippines to head the local operations effective next month.

▲ The modest-sized Poblador Bautista & Reyes law office, lawyers for our impeachment witness Clarissa Ocampo, is starting to get outsized by overseas industry stormtroopers.

The firm is now being cited along the truckinund "Big Three"—Sycip Salazar, Romulo Mabanta, and Angara Law—in the latest edition of The Asia Pacific Legal 500 as a "good all-rounder with strength in depute resolution, corporate advice and labor law."

Heard through the grapevine

ROMMEL Trade and Industry Secretary Jurdi Nazarin, who now works for the Macapagas, is being tipped off as a strong candidate for the governorship of the Bangko Sentral.

Inwards: Like incoming Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima, Nazarin is a known dove of SGV.

Upside: Fiscal and monetary policies could arguably be aligned without second-guessing from each side.

Meanwhile, rogue, fellows Yuchengco himself just might make it as the country's new ambassador to Washington, where, in his limited spare time, he could continue receiving private plane lessons, away from the prying eyes of his tough daughters.

Email: cocktales_pdi@philstar.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com

GOINGS-ON

Job fair

ISUZU Philippines Inc. (also Chevrolet Dimaculangan Inc. will hold a job fair from Jan. 29 to Jan. 30 in Cagayan de Oro City. The firm will hold the event in partnership with a multinational call center company to recruit English-speaking graduates with strong computer skills.

The job fair will be held at the Seminar Room 1, Mindanao Ave. Gaisano Road, Cagayan de Oro City. On Jan. 28, John Clements Consultants will also sponsor a pre-fair at the Xavier University in Cagayan de Oro, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Early applicants will be given priority.

GSIS pension talks

CONSULTATIONS about the Government Service Insurance System's (GSIS) pension program will be discussed today during the pensioners' regular weekly show, the GSIS Members' Hour.

The GSIS Members' Hour—which airs Fridays from 6 to 7 p.m. over DZRB 4—has invited GSIS officials to explain the various modes of information available to GSIS members.

The program will also discuss the issue of survivorship, or the pension program the GSIS extends to dependents of deceased GSIS pensioners.

LIFESTYLE

Text us your feedback: inquirer lifestyle<space>your message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

SILVER jewelry by Annie Chen

PHOTO COURTESY OF PROJECT MAGAZINE

Cebuanos' acute sense of home

CEBU was still flushed from the massive success of Sinulog when we settled down in the vast ballroom of Waterfront Hotel for cocktails.

Margot Osmeña, the indefatigable woman also known as the mayor's wife, was talking about the attendance of millions to Cebu's annual fun and how a hardly known city in Mindanao, Tangub, won the best performance. The other woman chirped in that indeed, this must have been the best Sinulog, if it's fair at all to pick a best year.

LIFE-STYLED

Thelma Sioson San Juan

We make yet another design find in this city whose people have sense of pride

Listening to Cebuanos, you realize how they're different from the rest of the country—they're unabashedly proud to be Cebuanos. While other Filipinos have been into self-bashing for so long now it seems chronic, the Cebuanos have that old-fashioned, even giddy, sense of pride in their hometown, whether it be their resorts, furniture makers or lechon.

It rubs off on you; the likes of Waterfront general manager Marco Protacio already feels like he's a Cebuano.

Its malls are so here and now, yet there's something about Cebu that remains quaint and Old World. People still know each other, and run into each other event after event. The community remains that cozy and close-knit.

Metro Society writer Maricris Encarnacion, who's been based in Cebu since she got married in the mid-'90s, hilariously declared over dinner, "It's harder for men to fool around here because you'll be found out in less than two hours. News travels that fast." What was more amusing was that the men at our table agreed.

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Indeed Cebuanos are cocooned in Cebu, even as they're quick to shop or do business in Metro Manila or elsewhere. They have this acute sense of home.

"Perhaps it's because we were left out during

(Turn over to) C2

CEBU Gov. Gwen Garcia and Marissa Ferman

TERESING Mendezona and Margot Osmeña

WATERFRONT Hotel and Casino-Lahug GM Marco Protacio and Arcy Gayatin

Cebuanos' acute sense of home

From page C1

the Marcos years," Cebu high society doyenne Teresing Mendezona said, trying to explain why Cebuanos are self-sustaining, why they stick together and are proud of their roots and resources.

Good mix

So they were all there Tuesday last week at Waterfront during the Cebu launch of Metro Society—a good power mix of the Chinese and mestizo Cebuanos, of political protagonists, of young and senior generations.

Apart from Margot Osmeña, there was Cebu Gov. Gwen Garcia with fellow Theresian Marissa Ferman, who also brought along her mom Ella, sister Margot, brother Mike and his wife Joyce.

It was a good chance for the Fermans to touch base with visiting Ernie Lopez, whose dad, the late Gerry, was a good friend of Marissa's late dad, the former Chief Justice and Senate president Marcelo Fernan. There were also the Abolitzes—Chari, Annie, Bernie.

Douglas and Anabelle Luym made a rare social appearance for daughter Amanda, who is among Metro's talented photographers.

Guests sauntered around the ballroom stylishly set up with blooms by Rose Amorena. Obviously, Waterfront's Marco left no stone unturned in giving Metro Society a rousing welcome to Cebu, no matter that the huge hotel was a beehive that week because of the 3rd Global Pinoy Networking Conference.

Society editor Lia Bernardo, Raul Manzano, Glenna Aquino and Marichelle Ligon worked the room helped by dozen Metro friends Marissa, Teresing, Jaime Piccornell and Nelia Nuri.

Ecstatic over Monique

Of course, Amparito Lhuillier was around, with husband Michel. Amparito remains ecstatic about the continuing success of daughter Monique in fashion, the first Filipino fashion designer to have broken into world fashion.

Apart from her stores in L.A. and Minneapolis, Monique is opening in New York—perfect for her Hollywood clientele in the East Coast led by Sarah Jessica Parker. A story on Monique comes out this week in Newsweek.

Shangri-La Mactan's Neil Rambaca and Jaja Chiongbian hopped over from their resort property, which was packed that week with Korean, Japanese and Chinese guests, to join the launch.

The designers came in full force—Philip Rodriguez, OJ Hofer, Arcy Gayatin, Protacio Empacora, who introduced us to the upcoming ones. Fashion accessory designer Michiel Arsaigh came with Debbie Enriquez.

Kenneth Cobonpue came with wife Susan. Kenneth is the Filipino furniture designer who continues to win acclaim abroad and gets featured in prestigious design books. The latest feature on him is in the International Design Yearbook 2004 where the editor Tom Dixon wrote: "The Philippines, over the last few years, has produced an outpouring of ethnic design. Utilizing traditional local material such as wicker, rope and wood they have produced furniture which seems to echo the lines of ancient rafts and boats. For such a remote location, they have had an impact on the design scene."

New talent

The next evening, over dinner with Marissa, Governor Gwen and Teresing, we were to discover another Cebu talent, Annie Chen.

Like the governor, Marissa and Teresing, Annie was a graduate of St. Theresa's Cebu. What perhaps many don't know is that since Gwen ran for governor, her fellow Theresians have not only closed ranks behind her but have also helped her with "housekeeping details" in the Provincial Capitol building.

Teresing isn't called the "Martha Stewart of Cebu" (before jail, of course) for nothing. She helped out with the food and décor that night for the hundreds of participants to the Global Pinoy Networking conference. This dynamic team is prettifying the vintage building whose architecture is beautiful to begin with, with its vast courtyard and dome.

Annie, based in Singapore with husband Christopher Ramner and three kids, designs silver jewelry with a chic mix of semi-precious stones, minerals, crystals and beads. Her jewelry is sculptural, innovative, contemporary yet classic with clean and sharp lines. She has a gallery/store in Singapore where she has a growing market.

P4M in a night

We know of at least one man who virtually moved heaven and earth to raise P4 million for the Philippine General Hospital, and he's neither a politician nor a PGH official. Dr. Greg Alvior is an OB-Gyne who had a flourishing practice in New York for 30 years until he retired here a few years ago.

He's well-known among his neighbors in Ayala Alabang for his magnificent way with gardens. His house has a lush, natural garden, but his green thumb didn't end there. He built a garden along the creek down his road so that it's now a veritable park.

As a UP Medicine alumnus, he was persuaded by fellow alumni to head the PGH Medical Foundation Inc. a few years ago. Little did he know the blood, sweat and tears that awaited him in the performance of such task. He didn't cop out anyway.

He tapped his network and last November held a fundraising bash featuring the 100-piece collection of his close friend, Pitoy Moreno. For 20 years now, Pitoy has been offering his collections for big fundraisers of PGH.

The charity event meant to support the free medicine program for indigent patients and the renovation of the hospital's main pharmacy. Robert Seña, Issy Alvarez and Pitoy Marquez also performed.

For his part Pitoy did 100 Philippine costume-inspired numbers, many of them new.

This, a month after his milestone show at CCP. Pitoy really had a marathon performance late last year. With events chair Lolita Escobar Marquez and Alay sa PGH Fund Drive chair Cory Quirino, Dr. Alvior was able to fill 900 seats at the Westin, at P2,500 a plate. That was no mean task.

Since he decided to come home and settle down here, Dr. Alvior has been wanting to give back to his country. That's what happens when a man has time on his hands—and generosity in his heart.

I should know; he beats me in tennis—regularly. (That's where he's not at all generous with points.)

Double-duty dressing

THE LATEST issue of Mega magazine gives more ways to up your points in the fashion world.

Mega fashion assistant Maureen Dairi picks out three favorite evening pieces—the bustier, the cocktail dress and satin details—and brings them up to the light of day.

Consider wearing a form-flattering bustier instead of a long-sleeved polo or cotton shirt under a suit for a corporate appeal. It definitely gives a fresh twist to dressing for work, especially after changing a few accessories. The bustier can also work its way into your casual Friday dress code by pairing it with denim jeans and loafers.

For those who can't seem to figure how to wear satin during the day, here's a suggestion: counter the shine and glamour factor by matching it with either a top or a bottom in textured fabric and in whimsical hues like pink or lavender.

As for the cocktail dress, let it see the sun shine by turning it with a denim blazer and a tote or even a simple cardigan, but in a cheerful color like green or yellow for a casual-chic vibe.

Mega magazine is a publication of Mega Magazines & Publications Inc. Now available in all leading bookstores and newsstands nationwide. Call 6312859.

LILAC knit cardigan with satin buttons by Chocolate Clothing Company, black cotton tube top from Greenhills tiangge, black satin pencil-cut skirt by The Black Shop, purple ankle strap stiletto by Nine West, black satin clutch with faux diamonds by Tod's

BROWN chiffon pleated dress with pink belt by BCBG Max Azria at Rustan's, pink cotton cardigan with antique lace and rhinestone buttons by Trina Turk at Mix, gold watch by Visage at Rustan's

PINK cotton blazer by The Black Shop

LIFESTYLE

EDDIE Baddon poses with top model Marina Benipayo, who is dressed in a 1980s-inspired wedding gown reminiscent of Jean Collins in "Dynasty"

Backstage at the 'Wedding March'

IT'S been ages since I last stepped on the catwalk to do a fashion show. So, when director Raymond Villanueva called me to do the finale number for the bazaar's bridal fashion show, aptly titled "Wedding March," I was floored, to say the least.

I didn't think they'd want me, of all people, to do something like this. I mean, we should still be playing the blushing bride up onstage, but Raymond was very convincing.

Of course, it helped that I was to don a wedding gown by Jaggy Cardeno, undeniably one of the best designers ever.

And there, there was the lure of working with a whole group of artists such as makeup artist Patrick Ponsaran and designers Mike dela Rosa, Lizarita and Frederick Peralta, to name a few.

Naturally, I took the opportunity to pick their creative minds so I may provide brides-to-be with some useful information that can help them prepare for their big day.

So, in between rehearsals, makeup and the fashion show, I managed to interview and photograph most of the participating designers. Here are some trends, comparative statistics and what they have to say:

I took the opportunity to pick creative minds at the fair so I may provide brides-to-be with some useful information

APPLES' PICKINGS

Agatha Alberto-Escherysse

TOUCHING Up '20s look, Mike dela Rosa used subtly worked with crepe and chiffon carefully adorned with ribbons and beads.

Mike dela Rosa

Signature style: Simple lines and soft tailoring

Years in the business: 26

Advice to brides-to-be: "Choose a design that will look good on you. Don't go with what current fashion or the designer will dictate. Choose a design you're comfortable with."

Eddie Baddon

Signature style: Resort couture and avant garde, "always made-to-order with interesting lines, always designed exclusively and with feelings and emotions."

Years in the business: 15

Price range: Flexible, depending on the budget of the client, the design and the fabric.

Advice to brides-to-be: "Always be comfortable with your choices. Consider your budget, venue, time and other such matters. You must also have good rapport with the designer of your choice."

Backstage at the 'Wedding March'

Pictorial A3

TO DEPICT bridal fashion in the war-torn '40s, Jojie Llorens created tailored gowns with shoulder pads as worn by model Ana Lorna.

Jojie Llorens

Signature style: Architectural, most tailoring and focus on silhouette rather than realistic fabrics.

Years in the business: 15

Celebrity clientele: Janity Madrigal, Cricket Romero

Advice to brides-to-be: "Know what you want with regard to your gown and other details so you can tell your designer exactly how you want to look. Also, organize your budget."

Frederick Peralta

Signature style: Always sexy

Years in the business: 22

Celebrity clientele: Aurora de Tomi, Michelle Quintchil, G Tongi

Price range: Negotiable and depends on a number of things like fabrication, number of the entourage, etc. The designer prefers to work around a budget everyone is comfortable with and does "normal calculations and pricing of the event" so the gown is not over- or under-priced.

Advice to brides-to-be: "Designers are here to help execute and implement dreams so we cannot impose our designs. There are several things to consider when choosing your gown design. These are seasons or figure, height, lifestyle and so on. Remember, in the process of trying to achieve your dream wedding, you will encounter a lot of different people. Don't get disillusioned or too excited. Simply rely on the experts and know what you want. Don't stress yourself. Once things are settled, let things take their proper course."

Loretto

Signature style: High glamour, head-to-toe wowing clothes

Years in the business: 25

Celebrity clientele: Imelda Marcos

Advice to brides-to-be: "Try to lose weight so you'll look your best on your wedding day!"

TSD ladies never looked this good as Loretto creates a "hippie-ish," "earth-mamma" chic bridal gown using the raw linen of gorgeous Belgian lace.

Patrice Ramos-Diaz

Signature style: Feminine, soft, romantic

Years in the business: 8

Price range: Wedding gowns cost an average of P80,000, depending on design, fabric and details.

Advice to brides-to-be: "Once you've chosen your designer, trust him/her and allow a certain amount of freedom to explore more designs and possibilities."

PATRICE Ramos-Diaz creates yet another effortlessly feminine and fluid wedding gown that's just a tad reminiscent of the 1930's.

JC Buendia

Signature style: Modern Classic

Years in the business: 18

Celebrity clientele: President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Kris Aquino

Price range: Wedding gowns cost around P50,000 and above, depending on the fabric and embellishment.

Advice to bride-to-be: "When you've chosen your designer, trust him/her completely."

THE BRIDE'S father-in-law wears a barong tagalog and black pants, while the groom's sharp suit with peak lapels are inspired by 1970s-inspired but uniquely JC Buendia.

DESIGNER Frederick Peralta poses with Tim and one of his muses, G. Tongi, who is picture-perfect in a Jackie O.-inspired Mikado silk wedding gown with detachable train.

ERIC Pineda pays homage to his paternal grandparents, who were married in 1932, by creating a wedding ensemble based on what his grandparents wore, and also evocative of the Commonwealth period.

Eric Pineda

Signature style: Romantic and toned down. The designer wanted one as a customer designer so he tends to tone down his flamboyant designs for theirs when designing wedding gowns. He works around themes and drafts of the bride as the star in a theater production while he encourage acts as the supporting cast. He says his theater training when helping in the wedding preparations, making sure that details such as lighting and even flooring are taken into consideration.

Years in the business: 17

Celebrity clientele: Sunshine Cruz, Antonio and Carolyn Aberasturi, Jaime Gibbs

Price range: The designer asks for the bride's budget and then designs accordingly.

Advice to bride-to-be: "Be realistic with your budget and expectations. A well-conceptualized wedding will prove to be your effortless."

Lose those inches fast

KENNITH HERMES Lifestyle Editor

STRAMAC for lifting and tightening buttocks

FORGET the Jane bride cliché, most everyone in the Philippines chooses to marry in cool January.

That's understandable for the bride, who is probably dropping the pounds with the best-laid plans of wedding preparations and will look hot on her big day.

But what about the rest of us? We all swear to proactive self-control, but the summer December hits with all its decadent Christmas party spreads and buffets, we give way.

Even attendance also drops because we still have to work by day and attend a Christmas party right after, so there really is no time for honest-to-goodness workouts.

I had a wedding to attend on Jan. 2, and a dress that fit me to perfection three weeks before wouldn't even zip up. Thank goodness I found a good reason not to attend, as I had no good-as-out-of-town trip.

There were other wedding invitations to go to, though, and I knew my diet and exercise wouldn't make it on time for the next event. So I ran to the Belo Medical Center for help to lose the water weight and tone up as fast as I could.

The Lipoflight machine was booked solid, so I turned to the clinic's other alternatives.

The Body Scrub with Bioactive Seaweed sloughed off my dry dead skin, Slimbrush, which I brush and rotate all over my body. The bleaching lotion softened my skin and revved up my skin tone's inherent bluishness.

MAKEOVER 911

Ebony Salas

Ionithermie is my favorite treatment, but it may be on the way out with the success of Mesotherapy and Lipolight. It firms, tones and drains excess fluids instantly.

You are made to lie on a slightly hot mat, some cold metal mesh is draped on you and a mat is placed over your stomach. Then you are connected to a machine that gives out galvanic and faradic currents to stimulate blood and lymph circulation and contracts your muscles on the stomach, thighs, hips and buttocks, as if you're exercising.

When the treatment ends, you are so much perspiration on the mat. Just to show you how much of it was water weight—I lost an inch-and-a-half around my waist and hips area, 3½ thighs lost about .75 inches each.

This was only my first session, and my pants, which were burning before/band, could now fit a finger in between the waistband.

Endermologie was the next treatment I tried. Intolerance stats have shrunk my thighs and buttocks and significantly reduced my cellulite, but some were still stubbornly visible even without pinching.

Endermologie is a 25-minute procedure that involves putting a body smoking on you and massaging and massaging the affected area. It eliminates cellulite and also firms and tones the whole body while improving circulation. I also offered my arms for firming, and the stubborn cellulite in my thighs and butt became less obvious.

Stamvac. My lack of exercise usually showed in specific body parts which needed lifting. Stamvac uses hard-shelled suction cups that are attached to a vacuum-like machine. Originally used to tighten buttocks and smaller areas, bigger sections were discovered to lift and tighten sagging breasts so they looked fuller but compact, with thighs appearing longer.

One more thing it is famous for is firming sagging breasts permanently. Those who complete the 12-treatment program can gain as much as one full cup size in their bras.

As I didn't have much time, I had them put the machine on a higher setting, and it felt like a giant hand was pinching my behind.

The next wedding day I went to, people were saying I looked great and didn't gain at all during the holidays. What they didn't know was, I hadn't eaten that day because I was in the clinic for five hours taking in all the treatments as my dress would fit perfectly!

ENDERMOLOGIE

These treatments are no substitute for exercise, but they do help you slim down a bit

STAMVAC I

A caveat: These programs are not meant to replace exercise. I still do 45-60 minutes of aerobics a day and stay away from carbohydrates and sugar.

Call the Belo Medical Clinic at 8845205 or e-mail info@belomed.com

E-mail author at lim-ryan@yahoo.com

NU Skin Nu Face Essence capsules

Solutions to signs of aging

Nu-Face, a premium personal care product line manufactured by Nu Skin, is the answer to wrinkles, crow's feet, sagging chins and jaw lines and other manifestations of aging on the face.

Its Ageloc Revealing Gel is the next generation anti-aging technology that definitely reveals smooth and youthful looking complexion. The glycosaminone contained in the formula improves skin texture, refining pores as it gently promotes skin.

It also has ingredients that stimulate skin cell renewal while improving skin brightness and texture. With daily use, skin will be taken more radiant and protected from aging factors such as dehydration, dryness and stress.

For sagging chins and jaw lines, Nu Face recommends Nu Face Intensive Firming Serum. Enriched with age-defying Ageloc, it blocks the hallmark signs of aging by helping restore the skin's natural elasticity level—a key component to firm, healthy skin. This product also evolves the skin's firmness and contours the chin and jaw line for a more defined, youthful appearance.

Lastly, the pro-collagen peptides in Nu Face Line Corrector are only body action used to deep and fine lines, but also reverse their appearance without surgery. With regular use, your face will become more supple, smooth and refined.

No hormones, use the Nu Face line as a system or individually, depending on your skin condition. These products are exclusively marketed in the Philippines through Nu Skin's local affiliate, Nu Skin Philippines Inc.

Call 6890222 or visit www.nuskin.com.ph.

SOCIETY'S charity workers Fe Rodrigues, Mini Lizares and Meme Lozano

GOH LA (4th from left) Tina Gruenpeter, Kathy Ong and Kerry Syhongco

HIP runners Tina Tinio, Celine Lopez and Xiong Dalonzo

CLASSIC TRIO: Monique Villones with Bonnie Gotesco and Doris Magsaysay Ho

HIGH FLIERS: Fabrice Poch, jetting in from Hong Kong, with Cartier's Carmen Gomez Mercer and businessman Dude Yeoa from Singapore

One, two, three–time to party!

MANILEÑOS prime dy is prime come to full tilt mid-week form, pahanggan, as they hotsteed into the Rizal Ballroom of Makati Shangri-La for one of the highlights of the social season: the third annual Philippine Tatler Ball.

Needless to say, pahanggan, Tatler's brilliant managing director, that skull-flustered woman of substance Irene Marie Fernandez, was all fired up as she entertained such invited personalities like the newly crowning cocktails.

With the heroine "Moon Glimpse" theme, pagan flowing, the guests all admired the lavishly empty photographs of Manille's aristocracy "enshrined" whose graced the pages of Philippine Tatler.

Also resident were images of luminaries like Washington Sycip, John and Kim Fernandez, Ben Zobel, Mai Mai Calasanguin, Shelly Cojuangco, Gene Sobrepeña and Cha Ty Tantoh, plus others like them, while admiring the shots in the foyer and the ballroom, presented by the incomparable Ambassador Marvin of Makati Flowers, natch!

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

On time

Arriving fashionably on time was tall Dr. Anang Banzuar of Metro Stow clothings, Chui's German passionality for pas. Prominent couple Leonie and Shelle Atilano were there, too. The gracious Shelle made it to the second spot in my "Best Dressed" list, and she profusely thanked the Tatler staff.

Also seen were Makati's first couple, Mayor Jejomar Binay with his well-loved wife, Dr. Ursula B., interviewed showgirl Jennifer Baquiran Jacinto and wife Tina, beautiful couple Fred and Betty Uytengsu, Reina and Antoine Yen, and Dr. Luciano Ong and Helen Ong.

Arriving in from Cebu were business magnate Richard Lhuillier and his wife, super eye-candy Marguerite, together with world-famous philanthropist and socialite Marigold Ty-tang, who was a knockout in her bib yellow ball gown.

This was Tatler's biggest ball with the largest attendance to be, with over 400 elite pahanggan-ites in attendance.

Elegant Lina Ross, regional Tatler publisher and CEO, and Sheehab Guillen, senior regional editor, were in from Hong Kong to attend the event, editor Anton San Diego and yours truly the royal treasury and lifestyle editor, posing for the montage to do a hand of the bubbly. "For Tatler's continued success."

Beneficiary

An important part of the evening was the introduction by emcee and star of the night's beneficiary, the Children's Hour, to note the society that the Tatler Ball is just a night of frivolous partying.

Well, pahanggan, Tatler supports this organization that focuses on poverty-stricken, abused and neglected Filipino children. Fundraising on behalf of the organization, diva-ana "Diva Che" Madrigal Fabregas gave a short, touching speech, followed by a performance by the talented Center children's choir.

By the end of the evening, a cool P800,000 was raised for the Children's Hour, thanks to kind souls in the audience, in previous years, Philippine Tatler had the Sunny Goldsmos and Philippine Red Cross as beneficiaries.

For a lunchbox, topnotch singer Rhoda Santamaria impressed the crowd with her powerful voice. Serenading "R.E.S.P.E.C.T." the gal it with the audience's thunderous applause for her fabulous performance.

Tatler awards

Then emcee program was the much-awaited announcement of the Tatler awards. Hosting this segment were Tessa Prieto-Valdes and Bernie.

"The Most Eligible Bachelor" Award went to a member of the famous clan," they announced. And everybody guessed who it was—Joel Tantoco, naturellement.

Next, it was the "Most Promising Young Lady" award for society's current "It" girl, and our December 2004 cover girl, Carlos Lopez, unleashed in the stage in her eye-catching Rhett Eala gown.

For being the good life, the "Best Mixed" award went to... Isiah Lopez. Lester Tenard.

The "Most Stylish Woman" was easy to choose, she being a perennial fixture on any best-dressed list: Tina Marinduque Ocampo, as hot, gorgeously garbed as ever before.

Bringing some laughter and applause was the winner of the "Most Distinguished Gentleman" award, former Finance Secretary Lito Camacho, and he showed he deserved the award with a witty self-deprecating speech.

Next to be honored were the "Most Prominent Society Couple," artistic society or elite society's respected personalities, Fiorig Bechayas-na and his wife Moly Concepcion.

"Most Charitable Prize" was Doris Magsaysay-Ho for both her business and philanthropic endeavors. The night also happened to be Doris' birthday!

PHILIPPINE Tatler's bundle: Blue Canivers, Chi Ujueco, Tatler editor Anton San Diego, elegant Lina Ross, Asian Regional Tatler publisher and CEO, and Sheehab Guillen, senior regional editor, bantaying in from Hong Kong; and, lifestyle and society editor; Tatler's GM Ignee Palma and Pierre Calvaire

TATLER'S "most eligible bachelor" Joel Tantoco with Kai Prieto and Bianca Zobel

HSBC's first couple John and Warner Manning

CHILDREN and environment advocate Gina Lopez, former model and Gumaca Gen. Emilio Baloa Jr with her husband, southern baron Alberto Lopez

IN-DEMAND architect Antoni Mundaca and popular model Mark San Diego

"MOST Prominent Society Couple" Fiorig and Moly Bechayas

FRENCH Baker's Jolanda Rea and his wife, Escoffi's Marilou Reo

LE Fresh connection: Sun. Janley Madrigal and her husband, Minister Eric Velasco

SHANGRI-LA's pride, popular GM Jurlark Ignee with Tatler's managing director Irene Francisco, Cebu socialite Marguerite Lhuillier, Asia Tatler's director Lina Ross, Singapore society lady Margo Chan and popular cardiologist Randy Francisco

INTERNATIONAL pals Edward Miailhe, Beatrice Miailhe, Valerie Courchia and Anthony Courchia

BENNIS Puddes and his wife Tessa Prieto-Valdes with her brother Paolo Prieto

Business pillar

Finally, it was time to recognize a person who has made an indelible mark in Philippine business. Definitely one of the most respected men in the ballroom, Washington Sycip was called onstage for the "Pinnacle Award." He, too, gave a short speech, made memorable when he quipped he was "drumming up support for the Happy Hour, I mean, Children's Hour." That brought down the house.

Then it was "last party" time, as the band cooked the dance floor as much that even the country's top unicorn performers, Gary Valenciano, couldn't resist and got up onstage for an impromptu performance.

So as all of Tatler's happenings, the guests were home with Tatler powder bags, packed my Ellerman, Christian Dior Poiffon and La Mer products, courtesy of Boutique's Fortuna, but who else, it's on you?

Our last opinions were: BMW Premier, BMW Globe Platinum, the Makati Shangri-La, Bacchus Wine and the bubbly Veuve Clicquot. Now, let's this to Tatler!